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# VENICE VARIETY

THERE IS NO DOUBT that the Venice Festival this year had its hiccups but it must be recognised that this is a kind of octopus event with its tentacles reaching out into areas which other festivals if at all, only briefly acknowledge.

Films are not only shown at the Lido Palais du Festival but also in cinemas in Venice itself and at Mestre, selling around 16,000 tickets each day (official figures) with a large proportion of the showings being of an experimental nature.

Again the symposium in which film-makers, critics etc., put forward their ideas and points of view makes an important international forum. The 'Sound and Image' research laboratory that Lizzani founded last winter (the results of which were shown during the festival) is an imaginative step. To listen to Robert Bresson explaining that the ear is even more important than the eye — "sound gives the flat image depth" — was invaluable if not exactly new, but watching five musicians improvise on images of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* gave immediate point to the assertion.

But vital was the pleading of Martin Scorsese, abetted by Antonioni, for the safeguarding of colour films. Antonioni spoke of his own experiment with colour and video and asserted that in ten years the move to electronics would be definitive.

Scorsese was emphatic about the need for the proper conservation of colour films. Really, said the director, we are writing on the wind and there will be nothing left of our work. Major companies like Eastmancolor and Kodak and major studios should accept their responsibilities.

A petition to this end was signed by many distinguished film-makers such as Anderson, Antonioni, Bergman, Fellini, Vidor, Wyler etc.

Proving his point Scorsese had shown trailers for the film *Kentucky*, made in 1938, which had its colours intact, as against one made in 1955 of *The Land of the Pharaohs*, which had disintegrated into a dirty rose monotone.

However, as one authority pointed out, it was the master negative that had to be carefully conserved (not exploitation prints from it) and in a version which the director accepted as his own work (not a cut version made for exhibition purposes).

Finally, many critics remarked that the Venice Festival was worth the effort if only for the remarkable Mizoguchi retrospective, organised by Adriano Apra, and the de luxe splendidly illustrated catalogue that accompanied it. A model of its kind in the examination of the director's obsessional themes and style, such an exhibition should be maintained for a period of time to allow it to travel and be shown at national film institutes and other responsible centres.

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Brooke Shields and Christopher Atkins  
in THE BLUE LAGOON  
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ISSUE



Paddy (Leo McKern) does what he can to cheer up his young fellow-castaways.  
Emmeline (Elva Josephson) and Richard (Glenn Koenig).

## THE BLUE

## LAGOON

Richard (Christopher Atkins) discovers a primitive way to fish in 'The Blue Lagoon'. (Columbia-EMI-Warner).

WHAT WOULD IT BE like to come of age in an isolated corner of the South Pacific and experience the mysteries of adolescence without adult guidance?

This is the theme of Henry De Vere Stacpoole's famous novel, *The Blue Lagoon*, written in 1903. Two children are shipwrecked on an island paradise with only one adult survivor, the ship's cook. When he dies, the children, alone and unadvised, must cope with the bewildering variety of physical and emotional changes entailed in growing up.

Producer/director Raoul Kleiser's second feature film, *The Blue Lagoon* stars Brooke Shields as Emmeline and newcomer Christopher Atkins as Richard, two teenagers discovering themselves and the splended confusion of love. Leo McKern also stars as Leo, the other survivor of their sunken schooner, with William Daniels as Richard's father and Emmeline's uncle; in their first screen appearances are Elva Josephson as the young Emmeline and Glenn Koenig as young Richard.

Kleiser, whose first feature film as a director was *Grease* — the biggest box-office hit of 1978 — directed and also coproduced *The Blue Lagoon* with Richard Franklin. Douglas Day Stewart wrote the screenplay, based on the novel by Stacpoole, and Oscar-winner Nestor Almendros was director of photography.

Filmed entirely on locations in the Fiji Islands (a privately owned island called Big Turtel *The Blue Lagoon* was a project that had been a passion of Kleiser's for years).

"I read the novel about eight years ago, and I thought 'Someday I will make this into a movie,'" says the 32-year-old director, who has earned a remarkable reputation for some of American television's finest presentations, including the Emmy Award-winning *The Gathering* and *The Boy in the Plastic Bubble*.

It didn't concern Kleiser that the book had already been made into a film in 1948 — with Jean Simmons and Donald Houston. Kleiser notes that the original version made many deprivations from the novel and believes his version reflects Stacpoole's intentions more clearly.

Stacpoole's turn-of-the-century novel grappled with an enduring question: is it nature or nurture, instinct or learning which makes us what we are?

What sort of people would two children become if deprived of parents, if deprived of the support and strictures of civilization?

In the film as in the novel, Richard and Emmeline are among the few survivors afloat in lifeboats after the schooner carrying them to San Francisco bursts in flames.

In the smoke, confusion and a thick sea mist, the dinghy containing the two children and Paddy, a galley-cook, is separated from the flotilla. Days later, carried by ocean currents, they drift to the shore of an island in the middle of nowhere.

The cook now becomes their father, teacher and final authority — roles he is totally unprepared to fill.

Tough, gruff and oddly responsible, Paddy has a sense of survival which is essential for the children. He has them help him build a thatched hut, teaches them how



The maturing Emmeline and Richard begin to tease and fight. From 'The Blue Lagoon'. (Columbia-EMI-Warner).

to fish, shows which fruits are good and which are poisonous, indicates where it is safe to play and where it is not. But one night, befuddled by drink, he stumbles into the surf and drowns.

As days become years, Richard and Emmeline learn the lessons of their island world. Playing in the blue lagoon of their cove, they become as one with the exotically beautiful sea creatures. They know and use the woods and the reefs with assurance and familiarity.

With adolescence they change. They fight, tease, taunt, frighten and embrace each other. They lie together with uninhibited pleasure. Their innocent sensuality becomes a sensitive, natural love. Pregnancy widens them; and when a beautiful child is born they are completely baffled.

The two learn to feed, protect and love their son. Instinctively they shield him when danger threatens. Impelled by a uniquely human urge, they endeavour to instill in Paddy (named after their mentor) a sense of history and their origins.

Obviously, with a film such as *The Blue Lagoon* in which a tropical paradise is evoked, the director of photography was one of the most important choices the producer had to make.

Randal Kleiser wanted cinematographer Nestor Almendros so badly that he followed him first to Paris, then to New York, where friends finally arranged an introduction.

Emmeline (Brooke Shields), holding their son, and Richard (Christopher Atkins) discuss his plans to salvage the boat which carried them, as children, to their deserted island paradise.



That Almendros is held in such high esteem is understandable. His Academy Award-winning *Days of Heaven* is as visually spectacular as his Oscar-nominated *Kramer vs. Kramer* is moodily sensitive.

Long recognized as the master of natural lighting cinematography, Almendros credits his penitless early days as a Spanish exile in Cuba for his introduction to the arts.

He learned more about it when he studied under Hans Richter at the New York City College Institute of Film Techniques in the late 1950s.

Returning to Cuba after graduation, Almendros found she cinema had been nationalised, and soon left for Europe with his 16mm film, *Gente de Playa*.

Its *cinéma-vérité* style not only made it a favourite at European film festivals, but also brought him together with like-minded European film-makers — specifically, director Eric Rohmer.

Making his first major film as Rohmer's cinematographer with *La Collectionneuse*, Almendros went on to photograph five Rohmer films in all, including *Love in the Afternoon* and *Ma Nuit Chez Maude*.

He also shot seven films for director François Truffaut, (*The Wild Savage*, *Conway Love*, *The Story of Adele H.*) and all of Barbet Schroeder's films, before he returned to the US for Jack Nicholson's *Going South*.

It was while working for Truffaut that Almendros came upon "the magic quarter of an hour between twilight and night, when there is a bizarre light, like that in an aquarium. One does not know where it comes from but it is beautiful," he says.

That moment, and the Panavision camera, have since become his favourite sources for the look he prefers — and he uses them both in *The Blue Lagoon*.

# THE SHINING



**THE SUCCESSFUL FORMULA** for the detective-cum-thriller story was established by Conan Doyle with his Baker Street sleuth but its modern format was perpetuated by many writers in the 20's and 30's led by Agatha Christie and then less bourgeois minded, Edgar Wallace. The essence of this later style was not to impress with the detective's acumen but rather to make the reader, himself, the detective by offering the clues from which he could deduce the criminal.

The style inevitably meant tying up the ends — another reason why the format was so successful — the great public likes nothing better than a nice tidy romantic happy ending and, in a detective story, all the trails run satisfactorily to ground.

This tidiness in our fiction, theatre and cinema, was only rarely broken down, and it was not until the nouveau roman arrived that shoals of writers began in the middle, worked backwards and then came out with the final denouement. The public was (is still) conditioned to explanations.

In art, even with cubism, there was a certain logicality of vision, but when surrealism came into being, logic flew out the window and explanations were superfluous — one had to sense the atmosphere, the mood, the atmosphere, the atmosphere.

Max Ernst may be counted as a major figure in the surrealist movement. Early influenced by Chagall, whose paintings Blaise Cendrars called "supernatural", Ernst's whole career is about the supernatural, that something which reason cannot explain but which exists in our reaction to Ernst's work. When Gérard Patai made a film of the painter some years ago Ernst would not explain, but simply explore his memories, experiences, meetings, visions, the petrified forests, the birdmen.

His *Fotographe* is perhaps, his most famous contribution to surrealism — these tracings and rubbings of natural things — wood, leaves, anything that would rekindle a pattern to the tracer, were assembled into the most fantastic landscapes and figures.

In the opening sequence of *The Shining*, (with the shots from a helicopter following the car), there is one overhead shot of a fir forest that is a marvellous *fotographe* and which gives you that typical Ernst sense of the fear of the unknown.



Director Stanley Kubrick checks on a shot for his 'The Shining'.



Jack (Jack Nicholson) talks to Lloyd, the ghoulish bartender in the ballroom of the Overlook Hotel.



*The Shining* has to be taken rather like an *Ernest fotographe*. No good looking for tidy ends with everything neatly explained — there is no explanation, only odd, vaguely linking facts that refuse to be set neatly into a final solution.

One presumes that Kubrick started out with a script orientated on extra-sensory perception with the child Danny figuring prominently and early in the tension with his anticipation of the brutal murders and suicide that took place at the hotel years before. Then it is also likely that as Kubrick realised he had an incredible performance by Jack Nicholson, one that is likely to remain as a classic, he shifted the emphasis and went for *Ernest fotographe* rather than explanations.

*The Shining*, as it is shown here (some 20 minutes lighter than its American version) is a remarkable transformation of a man, from an unremarkable teacher and would-be writer (perhaps with a slightly neurotic persecution mania in terms of his wife), through the stages of creative frustration and the seizing on his wife as the cause of his anxiety, to the final climax of hallucination, dementia and violence.

The basic plot is about Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) who, with his wife Wendy (Shelley Duvall) and seven-year-old son Danny (Danny Lloyd) goes to stay at an isolated hotel in the

Canadian Rockies where he is to be the caretaker for the coming winter — the hotel is just closing up until the following April. When taking the job he is warned that loneliness can react on people in drastic ways — only a few years back a caretaker ran amok and axed his two young daughters, shot his wife and committed suicide. Jack smiles — nothing like that is likely to happen to the Torrances.

Yet already we know that Danny has not wanted to come having seen two images that have scared and worried him. Danny has the gift of extra-sensory-perception which, in the black population in parts of America, is known as "shining".

When the Torrances reach the hotel, Danny gets to know the head chef, a black man, who is about to leave with the rest of the staff. He, too, has the gift of "shining" and can communicate with the boy without speaking.

The first tension concerns Danny when he rides his bike past room 237 which he knows is the evil room.

But it is when we see Nicholson with a few days growth on his chin that we know where the horror is going to be. His is a remarkable performance of disintegration — the signs of instability and dementia slowly appearing on his face, being forced back with a cheery expression only to be replaced by a terrifying glance of evil cunning.

The film is, technically, beautifully done. The hotel set is fabulous, allowing much to be made of Danny's constant cycling round the halls and down the corridors to be confronted by, we wonder, the tormented dead.

The camera work is superb, whether it's mounted behind the traking Danny or over a maze (which is used with Hitchcockian effect) or soaking up the stylish furnishings in the hotel, or catching the changing expressions of evil, horror and incomprehension that pass over the faces of the three Torrance.

The sound-track, as usual with Kubrick, plays its effective part whether with natural sound or recorded music, in this case the Karajan recording of Bartók's music for strings, percussion and celesta and music by Ligeti and the Polish composer, Penderecki.

A first-class piece of film-making but don't think it's going to be a two-plus-two equals four evening.

Gordon Reid.



# Venice 1980

from  
**PETER  
CARGIN**

Gena Rowlands, splendid in the title role of Cassavetes' 'Gloria'. A retired moll gets tangled up with saving a young Puerto Rican boy from the Mafia.

FEW CAME AWAY from Venice convinced that its old prestige had been restored but, on the other hand, most came away glad that the festival seemed to be once more established on the festival calendar, and aware that Venice was in a state of mutation and that it would take a year or two before this link between the past and the future (which it was trying to establish) would be properly adjusted.

Major criticisms were lack of translations for those without fluent Italian yet an over-supply of material in Italian dredged up from early and obscure publications which were hardly relevant to today's climate; lack of adequate screening venues for the 1600 journalists at Venice. All this contributed to much confusion and everyone had a personal experience to air, often amusing afterwards, but not at the time, particularly if it concerned lack of accommodation.

Festival Director, Lizzani was already defining the festival the day before it opened, agreeing that there were perhaps too many films and next year there would be less, but he impressed on critics that the audio-visual medium was no longer confined to 90 minute films but ranged from 30 minute pieces to 14 hour TV series and that the festival was trying to embrace 'the audio-visual scene of tomorrow' as well as 'safeguarding the best of yesterday' (retrospectives and Visconti's original version of *Ludwig* were examples of this last intention).



Burt Lancaster as Lou and Susan Sarandon as Sally in Louis Malle's award winning 'Atlantic City, USA'.

A *Made Da Terra* (screened a day late, some said deliberately to create a 'want to see' situation) was originally some seven hours long, but Embrafilme of Brazil had somehow persuaded the director to cut it to a mere 150 minutes. In the programme the film was briefly described as, 'an epic-didactic poem on the social-mystical contradictions of the contemporary world'. In the event this proved to be a wild, theatrical attempt to show the state of Brazil today and in particular its place as a third world community. Mixing reportage of the carnival, with interviews centred on Brazil's recent political history, and sequences reminiscent of the American Underground cinema of the early sixties it had a wide-

screen format. The film was paradoxically but predictably with Rocha in this mood made almost entirely with a hand-held camera technique with frenetic zooms, and inverse shots etc. The director's intentions were beyond me.

The British entry *Richard's Things*, promised much. Liv Ullmann as the wife who discovers that her husband (who dies early on in the film from a heart attack, while away on business) had a young mistress for some time, and it was her who was with him at the time of the attack. Anthony Harvey directing from a Frederic Raphael script. Freddie Young's photography and Georges Delerue's award winning music.





A scene from Angelopoulos's 'O Megeleondros' (Alexander the Great). A bandit escapes from prison with his gang, kidnaps some British tourists and holds them in exchange for an amnesty. Back in his native village he finds a teacher has instituted socialism in place of his own authoritarian rule. But both teacher and bandit are forced to join forces against the soldiers of Authority and the village and people are annihilated except for a boy who escapes on Alexander's white horse. The year is 1900 but the spirit of the people lives on in 1980.

The weak links in all that talent were the script, which never came to life, and Amanda Redman who, as the young mistress, never seemed to know what she was doing with the part. The relationship between the two women seemed artificial and overtly ambiguous. Apart from the convenient disappearance of her teenage son (and dog?) did it need, in this day and age, the younger woman, when seeing the older one off, after they may have slept together, whispering first her feelings and then shout a conventional good-bye?

Children and young people figured prominently in the films. Luigi Comencini's *Volta Esegno* has a ten-year-old boy whose parents were no longer living together and whose disappearance allows us to see, in numerous flashbacks, how the relationship came to be in this state of deterioration. Vaguely along the lines of Kramer vs Kramer, without the divorce tribulations. It was, like that film, a little too confectioned, with obvious audience milking visually and musically.

The Russian film in competition was yet another version of the Chekhov story — *Rasokaz o Nevesemom Celojeve* (Story of an Obscure Man) by a little-known director, Vitautas Zalakajevicius. A servant in the household of an arranged marriage asserts himself and eventually takes care of the wife when she becomes pregnant. Although the subtleties of the story escaped me (being one of the films with no translation)

the director uses the interiors of the house very well, not "opening out" the film artificially but moving his players naturally in the settings. He also has a nice sense of atmosphere both here and later when the wife and servant go to France; he to convalesce and she to have the baby.

## AWARDS

**Section: 'Quality for the Commercial Cinema': Golden Lion — ex aqua: John Cassavetes' 'Gloria' (USA) and Louis Malle's 'Atlantic City, USA' (French/Canadian).**

**'Emerging Cinema': Golden Lion — Thodoros Angelopoulos's 'Alex the Greet' (Greece).**

**'First Work': Golden Lion — Peter Gothér's 'A Special Day' (Hungary).**  
**Young Talent:** Fernando Trueba's 'Operaria Prima' (Spain).

**Special Jury Mentions:** Serghei Soloviev's 'The Rescuer' (USSR); Peter Del Monte's 'The Other Women' (Italy); Robert Kramer's 'Gune' (France); Christian Reischert's 'Lena Reie' (West Germany).

### Unofficial Awards

**Actress:** Liv Ullmann in 'Richard's Things' (Britain).

**Actor:** George Burns, Art Carney and Lee Strasberg in 'Going in Style' (USA).

**Grand Prize:** Thodoros Angelopoulos's 'Alex the Greet' (Greece).

The need of festivals to have American participation was demonstrated by the fact that the two American competition films gained joint Golden Lions from the jury. John Cassavetes' *Gloria* had many admirers outside of the jury as well, particularly for Gena Rowland's performance as the gangster moll who turns to violence to save a small Puerto Rican neighbour's boy from death at the hands of the mob she has been associated with.

After a typically frenetic Cassavetes opening, the film seemed to fall apart, due to the non-sequitur of the script. Thus, leaving the apartment after the murder, Gloria and the boy are photographed by the press. The papers splash the boy's picture on their front pages and announce he has been kidnapped. Yet nobody spots the boy during his numerous trips through New York. Nor do the police make any apparent attempt to find him, while the gangsters seem content to let the woman shoot-up their men without responding (after Gloria has killed some mobsters in a car, in broad daylight, she is miraculously able to hail a cab which happens to be passing along a one way street). There are also a number of unrealistic plot-line coincidences. I also found Gena Rowland's performance as Gloria Swanson rather too mannered and something of a pastiche of Laureen Bacall.

Technically the film works but *The Killing of a Chinese Bookie* is the Cassavetes I prefer.

Carlo Tuzii's 50 minute documentary, 'Venice, The Last Night of the Carnival' was a somewhat frenetic picture of the famous 18th century Venice Carnival that was revived last February for the first time in 200 years — plenty of street shows and theatre performances lasting six days and six nights and some of the traditional characters from the Commedia dell'Arte were naturally revived such as Dr. Belenzzone and Pulcinella. The event was taken up with enthusiasm by young people from all over Italy and it will, no doubt, rank as a major tourist attraction. Tuzii's film captures much of the 'follie' and狂热 from medieval allegory to contemporary punk.



From Jonathan Demme's 'Melvin and Howard', the title meaning Melvin Dummar (played inimitably by Paul Le Met) and the late Howard Hughes (played also inimitably by Jason Robards). Melvin is a born loser as his first wife Linda (Mary Steenburgen) declares, and even when he inherits a fortune from Hughes' will (because he had once given the millionaire reclusive a lift and a quarter) he still remains the butt of fate. Meanwhile across the picaresque life of Melvin, we get a close-in look at American life today with its seething 'Dream' but perpetual struggle for the TV quiz fortune or the fruit machine jackpot. It's alive with a host of sharply etched characters who the director introduces with the enthusiastic unconcern of life itself.



Above: From Franz Weisz's 'Charlotte', about a young woman who leaves Berlin, and her parents, in 1935 to live in France with her grandparents. When the Nazis come to France she is torn between the calls of parents and grandmother. She begins to paint pictures to express her situation. Finally imprisoned in Auschwitz she left 1000 gouaches as a document of her increasing talent.

Gunter Lamprecht and Henne Schygulla in Feuerbacher's 14-part TV serial, 'Berlin Alexanderplatz', which was a major event at the Venice Festival. Looking uncannily like Emil Jennings in a heavy Jennings-type role, Gunter Lamprecht gives a powerful performance as a porter who, having served a prison sentence for killing his mistress, tries to take up his life once more. After relationships with different women he suffers a collapse in prison but survives in a state of indifference, an attitude, the director suggests, which allowed in the Nazi regime.



The other prize winner was actually a Canadian/French co-production, directed by Louis Malle. It did, however, concern America, being set in *Atlantic City USA* (the title of the film). After his exploration of life in a southern town for *Pretty Baby*, Malle has now cast his eye over a seedy, slightly decaying, northern sea-port which, like its central character, Lou (played with great presence by Burt Lancaster), has seen better times. Malle and his director of photography, Richard Cupka, have captured the feel of the place very well.

Lancaster is Lou, former small-time crook whose main claim to fame is to have spent ten minutes in the same cell with Bugsy Siegel. Now down on his luck and living in a dilapidated boarding house kept by a pal's widow (a hypochondriac with a pet poodle he has to take on walks while collecting the numbers game) Lou stumbles on the big-time drugs.

This chance comes about through his neighbour Selly (Susan Sarandon), seeking the good life as a would-be courtesan and disturbing Lancaster with her nightly ritual of bathing in lemon juice to remove the smell of fish (she works in a fish restaurant). Her sister and her sister's husband turn up unexpectedly at the house with a cache of drugs that the husband, Dave, has intercepted in Philadelphia. Chance brings the dope into Lou's hands and, with the money, he is transformed (perhaps too easily) into a smart, sophisticated guy.

He is able to take up with Selly and, like an old horn, finds for the first time in his life the courage when it is needed to protect her against the gangsters after the drugs.

The film is nicely written and most sympathetically played (only Michel Piccoli is wasted in a small role as a croupier trainer) and it has just enough pace to keep sentiment at bay.

The third American film I saw which, like the two others, should be showing here soon was *Melvin and Howard*. This had the possible chance desert meeting of Melvyn Dummar (Paul Le Mat, remember him from *American Graffiti*), a young, married man who has gone through numerous jobs, and Howard Hughes (Lanson Robards), near the end of his life. After a nice opening scene between Le Mat and Robards, wherein the latter is made to sing for his ride into Las Vegas (having crashed on a motorcycle he was somewhat mysteriously riding) the film turns into something of a light sociological movie, which follows the ups and downs of Melvin (mostly down), his wife (the delightful Mary Steenbergen) and daughter.

It's an interesting look at the American way of life, of people working on the fringes, with TV shows being not only the main form of entertainment but offering an opportunity of making money in insane quizzes. Director Jonathan Demme takes the whole thing speedily along, perhaps too speedily on occasions, or perhaps it was faulty editing that seemed to skip conveniently over story points.



Monica Vitti as the Queen in Antonioni's *'Il Mistero Di Oberweis'*. Unfortunately one still has memories of *Edwige Fauillere* in Cocteau's film about a queen who hides herself away when her husband is murdered on their wedding night and who falls in love with a man who breaks into her castle with orders to kill her. The two, after an abortive attempt to take over the country and rule it with justice, end in self destruction. Monica Vitti has not the stature to carry the play which requires the Cocteau Kitsch romanticism to make it work. For Antonioni it has been simply an experiment in electronic film making with video's more flexible use of colour. Sadly it comes off only in one or two sequences. In the press interview after the film's showing Antonioni said he had been aware of the necessity of telling a story in a different way, a new way for him, and to move away from the introspective and analytical style characteristic of his cinema up till now. "I was aware of the differences of video", Antonioni declared, "for example a greater density of colour, a greater hardness of the images, but this did not damage the drama which plays in dark, gloomy colours". Asked if he was satisfied with the work the director replied — "I am never satisfied". For her part, Monica Vitti (it was not her first experience of video) felt that the major difference was the absence of the director who, after giving his instructions, retired to a mobile cabin where he controlled immediately the results of the takes. "The actors didn't notice me," said Antonioni laughing, "they work better, they're more free then when there is a director watching them at close quarters."

#### Venice Workshop ...

In this section for First and Experimental Works, we finally had the opportunity to see the whole of the Algerian film, *Children of the Wind*, one part of which was shown at Berlin and impressed me immensely. The other two episodes seen here, *Cooked Eggs* and *Dreamer in the Images Country*, confirm the director's marvellous eye and sensitivity towards children trying to make their way alone in life on the edge of the desert. A lyrical documentary, almost wordless, more like a poem than a narrative. Director Brahim Tsaki.

Quite how the Czech film from old-timer Karel Kachyna came to be in this section I don't know, as it was yet another nostalgic portrait of life in the working-class quarter of Prague in the period 1925-1939. *Love Among the Raw-drops* was too artificial and overtly symbolic as two brothers fight over the same girl who takes them both to a 'Garden of Eden' to be tempted by grapes. At 2½ hours it was also too long for its short subject.

*C'est La Vie*, a French film from Paul Vecchiali, was certainly experimental, but cinema? Using wide-screen, played on an open theatre 'set' and shot in long-shot, this woman's lib tract took a radio phone-in programme as a starting point for a married

woman's consideration as to whether or not she should continue in her present rôle. The film really would have been much more suitable for a radio piece.

The other French entry in this section, *Guns*, was actually directed by an American, Robert Kramer, who is known for such films as *Ice*, *The Edge*, and *Mysteries*. I found it to be a pretentious piece about a group of young people in Paris whose lives crossed, thanks to the efforts of a reporter trying to uncover information about mysterious shipments of arms into the country. Rivette's *Paris Nous Appartient* did it very much better years ago.

Fassbinder's TV series of Alfred Döblin's famous novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* was shown in full (some 18 hours) during the Festival. Initial screenings caused stampedes and I only caught the last two hours of decadence. It would appear that Fassbinder has been faithful to literally every paragraph of the story. It has a heightened theatricality but with the director's marvellous way of making it into cinema.

Another famous director to become involved with TV was Antonioni — his eagerly awaited version of Cocteau's *The*

# Uomini E No

STORIES OF PARTISAN polemic and heroics have dwindled over the years in the Italian cinema but Valentino Orsini returns to the theme in his adaptation of Elio Vittorini's novel *Uomini e No*. It is at once a love story and a story of decision set in the Milan of 1944.

N2 is an intellectual who leads a partisan group and lives secretly in Milan, a city that is sick and oppressed, with every neighbour a possible enemy. People in uniform are dangerous, particularly the *Cane nero*

Renato Scarpa, (black coat), is on the receiving end in this moment from '*Uomini e No*'.



(Black Dog), the fascist chief who is a symbol of Nazi ruthlessness.

By chance N2 meets Berta with whom, years previously, he had shared a love affair. Now she is married and lives with her husband outside Milan.

"It's three years — I didn't know if you were even still alive".

"I could be thrown into prison — one couldn't guess what would happen — it was too dangerous to get in touch with you".

"I would have felt that I meant something".

It was a dialogue of frustration, a frustration that N2 has experienced in his work. He is an intellectual not a man of action and he burns with an inner rage and despair wanting the goal to be achieved today



Director Valentino Orsini advises Monica Guerritore and Flavio Bucci on how to do a scene for his new film, '*Uomini e No*', [Men and No Man].

## THE ITALIAN SCENE

Flavio Bucci in '*Uomini e No*', which was seen at the Venice Festival. The film is a co-production between Italien TV and Ager Cinematografica.



not tomorrow. His impatience is destroying him.

A woman, Lorena, in his group, sees the situation more clearly. "Who asked you to bear the cross for everybody? Nobody has the right to do that — everyone has his job, with or without you."

"You take it all too personally," says another member of the group, Conolano. "It's dangerous. One has to go one step at a time and every step has to be necessary. Advancing like that everything can be understood. The men have patience but you want everything and at once. Like a friend of mine in Madrid. With each bullet he not only wanted the death of an enemy but the immediate birth of the new world he dreamed of."

As for Berta, her love for N2 resums and with it a new awareness of her own human and social identity — she stays with her lover.

But the man cannot reconcile himself to the compromise of time. Love and a new society must be now — it is an impatience that death enjoys.

## NEW ITALIAN FILMS

Venice can't seem to keep out of movies — Dino Risi is just starting a new film there, *Phantom of Love*, starring Romy Schneider and Marcello Mastroianni.



# VOLTATI EUGENIO

Francesco Bonelli, plays the unwanted boy, Eugenio, in Comencini's new film, 'Voltati Eugenio'.



Pertisans shot in the Milan of 1944. From 'Uomini e No', best translated perhaps as 'The Men from the Boys'.



Right: from 'The True Story of the Lady of the Camellias.'



SIXTY-FOUR-YEAR-OLD Luigi Comencini has a film-making career spread over some 34 years, from 1946, when he won the Silver Ribbon for the best documentary with *Bambini in Città* to the recent Venice Festival where his *Voltati Eugenio* (They all loved him) was well received and is concerned for the welfare of a child.

Giancarlo and Fernanda have a child in spite of their disinclination for parenthood. After Eugenio is born the decision proves to be a mistake and they separate and the little boy is brought up by his grandparents feeling that he belongs to no-one.

Giancarlo's best friend, Baffo, has always thought of the boy as a major obstacle to the marriage and when he is sent to pick the child up from his grandparents he gets so irritated with Eugenio he leaves him on the side of a deserted road certain that he has done the best thing for his friend.

Giancarlo is furious when he learns that his son has been abandoned and, dragging Baffo along, sets out to find the boy. In the meantime Eugenio has had a number of adventures, befriending another wolf and watching a cow giving birth to a calf among them.

Unable to find Eugenio, Giancarlo has Baffo arrested but eventually the police find the boy in a barn with a dog he has adopted.

Monica Guerritore in a dramatic moment from the partisan film set in Milan, 'Uomini e No'.



On his return all the famay welcome him rapturously and Eugenio is bewildered by all the unaccustomed affection. But it doesn't last long and when Baffo is released from prison he advises the boy to run away and make his own life.

No-one notices his departure with his little dog running at his side.

The road he chooses runs across a railway line.

There is the whistle of the approaching train ...

A warm compassionate film, beautifully played by Francesco Bonelli as Eugenio, Bernard Blier as Baffo, Saverio Marconi as Giancarlo and Dalia Di Lazzaro as Fernanda.

# Edinburgh '80

The 34TH EDINBURGH International Film Festival 1980 had more films and activities going on than ever; at least three competing film showings each day, as well as seminars and discussions with film-makers.

The Festival began with the Gala Premiere of the American film *Honeysuckle Rose*, directed by John Schlesinger, starring Dyan Cannon, Anne Bancroft and William Netrill, one of the contemporary plants of country and western music. A pleasant easy to watch film (with music composed and sung by Nelson), but marred by a predictable story of a singer who has to choose between his wife and a girl who joins his band.

Since being shown in America, American films were given their first showings at the Festival, among them: *The Long Riders*, *Buckskin*, *Witness for the Prosecution* and *Witness*. *Witness* was the most interesting American film given its first showings at the Festival, among them: *The Long Riders*, *Buckskin*, *Witness for the Prosecution* and *Witness*.

Written and directed by Samuel Fuller, his last, it is a World War II epic, starring Lee Marvin, which is closely based on Fuller's own wartime experiences and is the colour of a film that I have not seen since more than 30 years ago. I liked the film and it made a fitting return to the screen of a legendary director, whose last major film was made as far back as 1964.

Outer space. Everyone else seems to like this film, but for me — unfunny.

I found some of the less expensive, independent American films far more impressive. *Gal Young* was one of the best films in the Festival. Produced, written, photographed and directed by Victor J. Berger, he has made several award-winning shorts. Set in backwoods Florida in the Prohibition era it is based on a story by Marjorie K. Rawlings. A widow of means, Mattie Sites, charmed into marriage by Trax, a young dandy down on his means, who intends to marry her and break up an illegal whisky still. He threatens to burn her and her objects. Mattie is long suffering, but when Trax returns, from a trip to town to sell his liquor, with a young girl, this provokes her to destroy the still and turn him out. The film ends with the possible emergence of a bond between the two women. Beautifully photographed and the acting, largely by a non-professional cast, is superb. Definitely a film not to miss.

*On Company Business* is another American production I found excellent and absolutely riveting to watch. It presents an excellent film from the continent and further afield, *Afghanistan*, a political thriller, *Film for Treatment*, produced by the Worktheatre, a co-operative group of actors formed in the late sixties. The film is directed by Erik van Zuylen and explores the emotional states that emerge when a man is admitted to hospital for a routine check up and begins to suspect that there is something seriously wrong with his health. I liked the film very much, but quickly found that it was warm, humane, courageous and often very funny. I cannot recommend it enough.

Another striking film from the Netherlands was *A Kingdom for a House* made by Tilt

On one level it's a thriller, posing the question of who killed the prostitute, Jennifer Collins, but, in closely examining the lives and lifestyles of the suspects, the plot becomes a study of the changing relationships between men and women, and how men treat the women in their lives.

Ken Loach's new film *The Gamekeeper*, made for ATV, focuses on the life and character of George Purse, a gamekeeper on a duke's estate, intimately observing his relationship with the country-side, with his family and with society. As he must prevent from teleporting and clearly defining his social position and his sense of property.

A well made film which I found interesting to watch, although I disagreed with everything the man stood for.

*Babylon* was an interesting first film made by Franco Rosso, who has previously worked on a whole range of other controversial black movies. This film, shot in south London, in the Brixton area, gives an uncompromising picture of the life and times of a group of young black citizens and the difficulties they encounter.

As always at Edinburgh there were some excellent films from the continent and further afield, *Afghanistan*, a political thriller, *Film for Treatment*, produced by the Worktheatre, a co-operative group of actors formed in the late sixties. The film is directed by Erik van Zuylen and explores the emotional states that emerge when a man is admitted to hospital for a routine check up and begins to suspect that there is something seriously wrong with his health. I liked the film very much, but quickly found that it was warm, humane, courageous and often very funny. I cannot recommend it enough.

Another striking film from the Netherlands was *A Kingdom for a House* made by Tilt



Unexpected manoeuvres in Samuel Fuller's 2nd World War story, 'The Big Red One' (ITC).

Film and Meathall, who exist to provide a film and video service, disseminating news that the institutional media ignore. In this film Tit and Meathall in cooperation with the squatters movement and with anti-militarist and anarchist groups set out to make a record of the demonstrations organised against Queen Julian's abdication and Princess Beatrix's coronation in an attempt to draw attention to the dire housing shortage.

Result is quite devastating to watch. Certainly one of the outstanding films

in the Festival was *The Lovers' Exile*, a joint Japanese, Canadian film made by Marty Gross, which brings to the screen, for the first time, a story told by the Bunraku Theatre (a revered cultural tradition in Japan). The story tells of a narrator and a musicali marry with elaborate human-scale puppets to give authentication and vitality to the events which often occur in scope. *The Lovers' Exile* is based on the classic Chikamatsu play *The Courier in Hell*, written in the sixteenth century in three parts (but here shortened for film purposes), which tells the story of a messenger very much in love with a low-class prostitute, who steals his clients' money in order to free his beloved from the teahouse. The film brilliantly depicts this (to our western eyes) strange theatre technique, and is always absorbing to watch.

Two other contributions from the East, both from Hong Kong, were *The Secret*, a first film by Ann Hui, a psychological thriller whose jigsaw-puzzle structure recalls the works of Alfred Hitchcock and *Mythos Murder*, a first feature by Tsui Hark, which combines elements of thriller, horror-fantasy and science fiction in a medieval setting when a remote castle is attacked by a strain or murderous butterflies.

Two rather similar films from West Germany, *The Kids from Number 7* directed by Ueli Bannister and *Summer* directed by Werner Meyer, and *The World that Sustains* directed by Robert Munkel and Isle Hoffmann, both depict, in varying ways, the rise of Nazism in Germany by showing its effect on the youth of the time. Two other films from Germany were Alexander Kluge's *The Patriot*, a rather bleak history which probes the Nazi German history and the difficult choices faced by a raw recruit in coming to terms with it, and *Ticket of No Return* directed by Ulrich Dettinger, a dark fantasy

set in the bars and streets of West Berlin which investigates the characters of two women, one rich and eccentric, cultivating loneliness and consciously drinking herself to death, the other a poor woman heading into the same trap.

They embark on a grotesque alcoholics' tour, and their progress in self-destruction is observed and commented on by a chorus of three women, representing "Societal Questions", "Common Sense" and "Exact Statistics". I found it always watchable but faintly repellent.

An interesting film from Hungary was *Mistress* directed by Judit Endre. Nira, the central character in this film, was the subject of an earlier documentary film by the same director. This later film is a fictionalised presentation of Nira and her family, the events in their lives and their pre-occupations: we see Nira's wedding and the birth of her child and the subsequent family life. A beautifully observed and well-made film.

The French film, which I think don't really come off were *Extrême nuit*, directed by Jacques Bral, with Christine Boisson, Gérard Lanvin and André Dussolier, in which the director creates an atmospheric



Nastasia Kinski is Tess in Roman Polanski's adaptation of Hardy's 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles'.

nocturnal world where the three characters live out an intense and violent relationship, which I find hard to take seriously, and *Jeanne Dielman* directed by Chantal Akerman, Stephen, with Corinne Larissa, Michel Voletti and Michel Roche — an unconvincing story of a dancer and her relationship with two men, one a conservative intellectual and the other a homosexual. Ultimately she realises that her dancing is the only thing that makes life worth living.

One of the best films was Krzysztof Zanussi's latest film *Constance*, which received the "Best Director" award at this year's Cannes Festival. It is the story of an idealistic hero determined to resist complicity in a world he regards as devoid of true values, and makes some trenchant criticisms of life in contemporary Poland.

To next page...

From the British spoof film, 'The Monster Club', directed by Ray Ward Baker.

Another American film I liked was *Heart Beat*, John Bryum's look at the Beat Generation and the story of the legendary triangle formed by Jack Kerouac, its prophet, its folk-hero, Neal Cassady and his lover, Carolyn. Playing Sister Speckle, Nick Nolte, and John Howard — a little too soft-centred, but enjoyable.

Simon, which marks the directorial debut of Marshall Brickman (co-writer of *Woolly Allen's Sleeper*, *Annie Hall* and *Manhattan*), stars Alan Arkin as a woolly-headed psychology professor who is brainwashed by five crazy scientists of the Institute for Advanced Concepts into believing that he comes from

impressive cinematic portrait of the C.I.A. and its sordid 30-year history, using interviews with ex-C.I.A. personnel and much newsreel material. It is a little long at three hours but some of the revelations that the film uncovers are quite sensational.

Some excellent British films were shown during the Festival and I liked *Brothers and Sisters*, shot in and around my home town, Leeds. Directed by Richard Wooley, with a cast that includes Carolyn Pickles, Sam Daker, Robert East, Elizabeth Bennett, Barrie Shore and Barry McCarthy, it is the B.F.I. Production Board's biggest budget feature to date.



From the Dutch film, 'For Treatment', directed by Erik van Zuylen.



From the Hong Kong film, 'The Secret', directed by Ann Hui.

#### From Previous Page.

A film which looked good on paper but in realisation was a great disappointment was *Deathwatch*, a West German/French co-production between Berlin and Paris, starring Romy Schneider, Harvey Keitel and Max von Sydow and shot in Scotland. It has what I think is an unlikely story of a woman who has been told she has only three weeks to live. This is fate and is, in fact, a scheme set up by a television company which offers her a contract to film her last days. On the last day she becomes fitted with a miniature TV camera in her brain using his eyes as lenses so that whatever he looks at appears on a monitor screen and is recorded.

He gets to know the woman and the programme of her last weeks begins, unknown to the rest of the crew. One man falls in love with her and turns of the cameras, losing his sight in the process. They run away together and the woman dies because the TV company is unable to find her and administer the antidote to the lethal drugs she has been given to simulate her fatal illness. The film is beautiful but unbelievable.

There were also seemed to be many more shorts. Two I liked a great deal were *Dan Segal, Last of the Independents* made by Thys Ockerse in the Netherlands (an interview in depth with Dan Segal, with illustrations of his work) and most similar and equally delightful film about the work of Billy Wilder called *Portrait of a 60% Perfect Man*. *Billy Wilder*, made by French director

Annie Trapat, in which this famous director looks back on the events of his life, from Vienna to Hollywood and world tour in his own private environment and the inter-view of his kind that he has ever given.

Another interesting short was *Because I Am King* made in England by Stewart Mackinnon which brings together diverse and, seemingly, unconnected material, including a seventeenth century tale of a minister who has to be king for a day, sections of a film made on Tyneside by the Central Office of Information in 1943, and a performance of the Bertolt Brecht/Paul Hindemith *Baden-Baden Cantata of Acquiescence*. In an attempt to demonstrate the way in which a number of writers have presented history and politics in their work.

The last short I liked very much was *Why* made in West Germany by Etti Miesen (a striking study of Mary Queen of Scots in which the events of her life are broken up into a series of single frames), and *To the Count of Four* an affectionate assessment of the life and music of the Count using photographs from the rare film footage from the Thirties and Forties.

Some of the Special Events at the Festival were most interesting.

There was an extensive retrospective of the films of Joseph H. Lewis, a prolific feature film director working in the Forties and Fifties and confined - with few ex-



From Ulrich Östlind's, 'Portrait of a 60% Perfect Man'. *Billy Wilder*, made by French director

captures to studio "B" pictures. His career has remained largely undefined and unexplored, although *Gun Crazy*, *The Big Combo*, *Undercover Man* and *My Name is Julia Rose* have begun to attract attention. I had only this chance to see one of the more obscure Lewis films, though, *Reindeer, Cry of the Hunter*, made in 1959 with Barry Sullivan, Vittorio Gassman, Pola Bergen and William Conrad. I found it a most interesting, well-made film and worthy of revival.

There was also a tribute to the Scottish director, John Mackinnon, with a selection from his silent works and a special preview of his feature film *The Long Good Friday*, a rather violent story of gangster life in London, starring Bob Hoskins, Helen Mirren and Eddie Constantine.

Best of all was a tribute to the National Film Archive's 45th anniversary; a retrospective programme of some of its rare treasures, chosen by the Archivist's team to cover that difficult period of cinema history, the changeover from silent to sound.

Some of the films were a delight to see again: E.A. Dupont's two films *Piccadilly* and *Atlantic*, Tom Walls' *Ropery No.9*, Charles F. Reines' *The Hollywood Review of 1929*, Walter Summers' *Race the Roof*, T. E. B. Clarke's *White's Journey's End*, Roy Del Ruth's *The Desert Song* and Castleton Knight's *The Flying Scotman*, as well as the more

readily available *Blackmail* by Hitchcock and *Sous les ponts de Paris* by René Clair, together with lots of early, fascinating sound shorts.

As is usual at the Edinburgh Festival there were seminars and discussions. There was a discussion on the questions raised by the film *Reindeer* / *The Komissar*, the author Stuart MacKinnon taking part; one on the Joseph H. Lewis Retrospective; another on the work of John Mackinnon, with the film maker himself taking part; and finally a two-part discussion on "Cinematic Narration" led by Peter Wollen, when we heard such interesting theories on narration in film depends on something happening". It was a strange gathering, largely insular, which prompted Forsyth Hardy in "The Scotsman" to write "The discussion, effectively directed, tended to avoid real issues and to dwindle into windy theorising ... Participation in a public seminar involving a discussion of the best and with causal, almost insulting, indifference".

Finally I must mention a film slipped into the Festival at the last moment *The Monster Club* directed by Roy Ward Baker, an amusing parody of horror movies with vampires, werewolves, snakesmen, wasp-women, ghouls and other weird creatures enjoying themselves to the beat of pop music. The film stars Vernon Pugh, David Pleasance, John Carradine, Britt Ekland and Patrick Magee - amusing but not really Festival material.



From 'The World that Summer' (West Germany), directed by Robert Müller and Ilse Hofmann. Picture above Jan-Claudius Schwarzbauer as Herren.



Brinsley Forde is confronted by the Recruit Neighbour (Bill Moody) in the British film, 'Babylon', directed by Franco Rosso.



Temso Yoshida with 'Chubu' in 'The Lovers' Exile', a film by Marty Cris.

The Festival ended with a Gala premiere of Roman Polanski's latest film *Tess*, his adaptation of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, with Nastassja Kinski as Tess, Peter Finch as Angel and Leigh Lawson as Alex D'Urberville.

The film is beautiful to look at and largely photographed in rural Normandy where Polanski has created a closer resemblance to the 19th century Dorset landscape than Dorset itself does today. I found the acting rather wooden and unconvincing.

A good and rewarding festival, but far too many films which failed to reach the standard necessary for such an event.

J.R.L. Reyner

# .....Video News

from  
**PETER CARGIN**

## VIDEO CASSETTE MACHINES — CURRENT CHOICES

You've not bought a Video recorder yet but have been thinking seriously about it? Well, as outlined in our first piece reviewing the whole field of video machines, formats and systems (CFR May '80), there are three main formats and provided you stick with one of these and don't want to change or indeed swap tapes with friends who have another format, you'll be all right for many years to come.

The three formats are VHS (still the most popular), followed by Sony Betamax and then Philips. Let's look briefly at the latest standard bearers of these three formats. As with all technology in its formative stage, advances are seemingly being made every month but just as you can wait for the perfect motor car so you can wait for the video recorder which will turn the pages of Radio Times for you at night and pre-select your programmes!

## SONY BETAMAX

One of the biggest splashes recently has been the arrival of the Sony Betamax C7 machine which is very widely stocked all round the country. It works from a remote control unit which can give you the following functions: record a programme; fast spool the tape either backwards or forwards; stop the tape; replay a programme at normal speed, at three times normal speed; pause; frame by frame advance of the tape; high speed search on the tape for a particular frame and a search for a particular programme you've recorded on a tape.

The machine has an alarm signal at the end of a tape and then automatically rewinds itself. You can also dub your own sound onto the sound track of the tape.

The C7 machine can be pre-set up to 14 days ahead to record a programme and up to four different time settings can be set up in this way. The tape on these machines lasts for 3½ hours and the C7 will cost about £630.

## FERGUSON VIDEOSTAR 3V23

I am including two examples in the VHS range for two very good reasons: first this format is still the most popular, especially from the pre-recorded point of view, and secondly because a very good ex-



Maria Schneider and Marlon Brando in 'The Last Tango in Paris'. Now available on Video Cassette from Intervision.

ample of the VHS range has just been announced as we go to press.

The Ferguson VHS VideoStar 3V23 has just about everything in one machine that is currently available. You will be able to programme eight different programmes over a period of 14 days; you can locate your recordings on the tape very quickly with the Picture Search device, which allows you to see the recordings at 10 times normal speed (backwards or forwards). Each new recording can be marked so that you can automatically find it later. The machine has of course freeze frame, single advance frame, double speed and variable slow motion. The display panel tells you everything: day, time, programme, channel, how much tape has gone and how much is left. All these features can be operated from a master Remote Control. Price should be under £700.

If, on the other hand, you want to get into the VHS format, knowing that what you record will be compatible with later machines such as that mentioned above, then

there is a new budget version for you at £499: the VideoStar 3V22. This gives you 7-day recording from a single channel, pause control, tape counter and memory rewind.

Thorn-EMI also announce that they should have a 4-hour VHS

cassette available for play before the end of the year, thus matching the Philips Video 2000, although you can only use one side of this tape.

## FERGUSON SHARP VC 6300H

Another recent addition to the VHS format is the Sharp VC 6300H. It carries an APLD (Auto Programme Locating Device) which means that a signal is automatically inserted into the machine at the beginning of every programme you record and the machine will find this whenever you want. Seven separate programmes can be selected from seven channels (when we have that number!) up to seven days ahead. It has a tape counter front loading system for the tape, an LED readout giving you a check on the amount of tape left (either during recording, play or rewind).

A wired remote control unit gives you six different tape speeds; frame by frame, still frame, double normal

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TRADE ENQUIRIES WELCOME

Video News from page 18.

speed, half speed, normal speed and a variable speed from still to normal.

Among other things this £600 machine has an automatic shutdown device which shuts the machine off when the tape comes to an end.

Finally the new system, the Philips VR 2020, using the Video 2000 format. Philips have, of course, been in the field for some while now with first their N 1500 system and then the N 1700 system, both using the VCR format. Now they've recently come up with a completely new format using a flip-over cassette, giving you four hours of recording on each side. It's based, for those technically minded, on what they call the Dynamic Track Following.

You can pre-programme up to five different programmes up to 16 days in advance and the machine will tune into as many as 26 different TV stations. It will go to any particular point on the tape indicated by the tape counter simply by keying in the appropriate tape counter number. The machine also has an automatic rewinder mechanism and comes out at about £590.

Any good dealer will be only too happy to demonstrate the possibilities and techniques of these machines; they will have easy instruction books with them and if you can work a tape recorder, a video recorder will present no problems. Remember to put a tape in however and that colour video can be seen only through a colour TV.

## RANK — RECENT VIDEO RELEASES

For connoisseurs of the 'Carry On' series, in 1970 the team went *Up the Jungle*; Sidney James, Joan Sims and Kenneth Connor being led on their expedition into darkest Africa by Frankie Howerd. (87 mins. £34.95 or 3 day rental £5). Gerald Thomas was responsible for the 'Carry On' series but, also at Rank, was Ralph Thomas whose *Nobody Runs For Ever* 97 mins.; price as *Carry On Up The Jungle*, a thriller made in 1968 has Rod Taylor as a detective from Australia, setting

out first to arrest and then protect the Australian High Commissioner to London (Christopher Plummer).

## MAGNETIC VIDEO ADDITIONS

Three more 'classics' are coming from Magnetic Video — first the musical with the unbeatable title, *There's No Business Like Show Business* (108 mins.) with Donald O'Connor, Marilyn Monroe, Ethel Merman and Mitzi Gaynor among the stars in what was, in fact, a rather disappointing and garish film (director Walter Lang). Then a couple of British films, *Carrington V.C.* (102 mins B/W) which had Margaret Leighton and David Niven leading a solid cast in a court-room story and *Storm Over the Nile* (111 mins. Colour) the remake of *The Four Feathers* this time with Laurence Harvey, Anthony Steel, Mary Ure and James Robertson Justice heading the cast. Zoltan Korda directed.

Derran is a company which has been in the home-movie business for many years; recently they have moved into the video field. Their first offerings are mainly action, horror sex movies. The action movies range from *Bruce Lee/The Man-The Myth*, to *Hell Is Empty* a crime drama; *Drummer of Vengeance* — an Italian Western on the theme of the avenging Stranger; *Brutes and Savages*, a collection of gruesome and bizarre rituals and *Dogs*, pretty self-explanatory, in that it concerns killer dogs.

The sex movies range through *Black Emmanuelle*, *White Emmanuelle* (Laura Gemser, Annie Belle respectively); the German film *The Sexy Dozen*; *Blue Belle*, *Annie Belle* again; *Gerard Pires'* French film *Let's Make a Dirty Movie*, an amusing French satire on porn film-making and *Andrea, The Nympho* with Dagmar Lassander. The other films in their catalogue are a number of horror films such as *Terence Fisher's Night of the Big Heat*; *The House of the Seven Corpses* with John Ireland and John Carradine; *Kingdom of the Spiders* (the spiders take over), and *Devils of Darkness* with William Sylvester in a tale of satanic rites.

## UNITED ARTISTS RELEASES FOR INTERVISION

Intervision have announced that some 20 recent films from United Artists will become available through their dealers from November. Titles include *Annie Hall*, *Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Sex*, *Last Tango In Paris*, *West Side Story*, a couple of *Pink Panthers*, *Rocky I & II*, *Rollerball*, *Coming Home*, *Casablanca*, *Network*, *Hair* and *Semi-Tough*. They will all be available on rental. Further details later.

Films in the Thorn-EMI catalogue will also be available through Intervision from November. This adds another 55 titles to the Intervision group's catalogue.

## VIDEO REVIEWS

Last month we mentioned the number of Australian films that Guild Sound and Vision have acquired. We have now had the opportunity to look at a couple of them.

### THE GETTING OF WISDOM — (A) 100 mins. Colour.

Directed by Bruce Beresford, with Susannah Fowle, Barry Humphries, John Walters, Sheila Heppenstall, Hilary Ryan.

This is one of the most successful and acclaimed of Australian films — it's just opened in America to considerable business. Based on the disguised autobiography of a girl from the outback, Laura, it shows how she makes it to a musical scholarship at an exclusive girl's school in Melbourne. Laura is high spirited, not above cheating at exams or embroidering a lie here and there. She has a slight crush on a beautiful older girl but finally wins through without losing any of her personality. Being mostly set in the school the film works well on television and I was held by it, even at about the fourth viewing. Very good technical quality.

### RAW DEAL — 94 mins. Colour.

An Australian film, but one which has not been released in this country (no certificate, therefore). Directed by Russell Hagg from a screenplay by Patrick Edgeworth. Music Ron Edgeworth.

Set in the 1860's it's a sort of 'Magnificent 5' story. A group of tough, desperate characters (all of whom have had a brush with the Law), are collected together in order to destroy a rebel Catholic camp in the middle of the country — all for bounty money secretly put up by the unscrupulous English governor. It's fairly predictable, with rather obvious characters including the clown of the pack (rather as in *Seven Samurai*, and is neither a strong enough 'western' nor a serious social document of Australia at the time. Technical quality again very good.

Concluded page 32

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# MIRAGE

November sees the appearance of what the producers call the great glossy' men's magazine on video. *Mirage*.

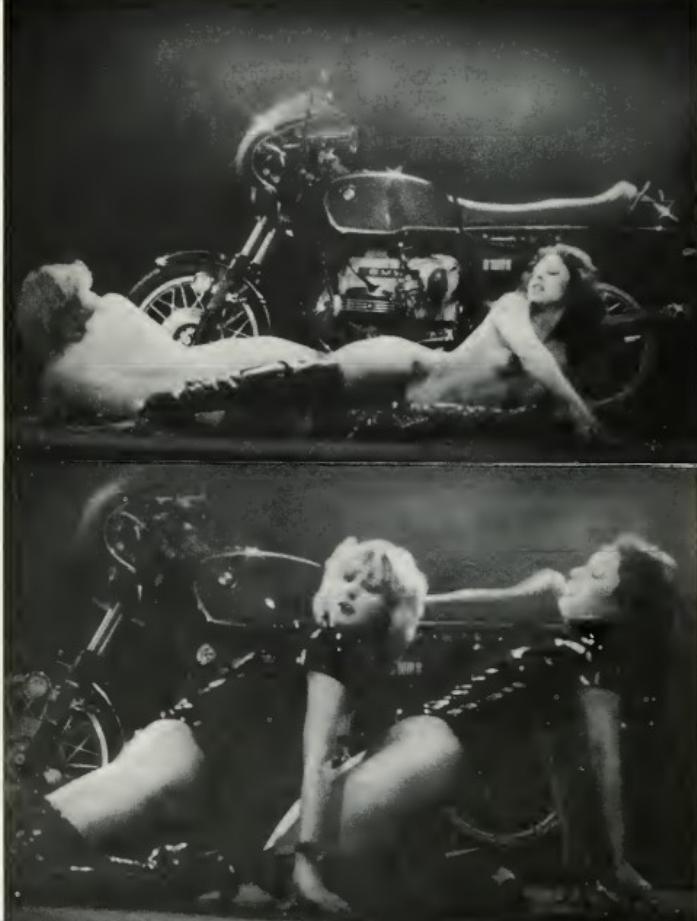
They call it glossy because they have aimed for the highest standards in every department. *Mirage* consists entirely of original action material (no stills) shot on video especially for this first edition of the magazine. No second-hand material is incorporated.

Of 50 minute duration, *Mirage* has a large cast of lovely girls in a wide variety of scenarios, including leather, fur, leather fantasy, a vanishing fantasy, an illustrated course on massage, a unique close-up exploration of the female anatomy and many other action sequences.

Shot with style and flair the high production standards are matched by the quality and value of several telephone sales offers featured in the magazine which are exclusive to *Mirage* viewers.

*Mirage* is available direct through mail order from Eve Electric, 248 Walton Road, East Molesey, Surrey and is also obtainable through all video retail outlets.

## VIDEO VIEWS





Ranzo Montagnani and Veronica Mirreli in Massimo Tarantini's new comedy, 'Two Friends, a Wife and Four Lovers'.

## TWO FRIENDS A WIFE AND FOUR LOVERS

**DR FRANTONI AND HIS WIFE**, Angelica, are very much in love. The idea of infidelity never enters their heads.

The doctor's closest friend, Paolo, is a bachelor and naturally cannot understand this dedication to one woman, even if she is as attractive as Angelica.

At a medical conference Paolo announces to his colleagues that he has discovered a remarkable tropical fruit, the Pamango, which has considerable aphrodisiac qualities. The juice of the fruit, squeezed into a drink, can bring on intense sexual desire in the imbibers.

When challenged to prove his statement Paolo agrees to try it out on Luigi who has just arrived and knows nothing of what has been discussed. Luigi innocently takes the proffered drink from his friend and tosses it down.

Immediately after the luncheon Luigi heads for the Grand Hotel where he has been called to treat the ailing Lady Brackson. Luigi innocently goes to his impassioned destiny followed furtively by 143 highly curious doctors.

Jammed in the corridor of the Grand's fifth floor the 143 Peeping Toms are obliged to witness the effect of the pamango through the keyhole of Lady Brackson's door.

Their diagnosis is unanimous — the pamango works — and how!

After her initial surprise at the doctor's advances Lady Brackson enthusiastically falls in with her treatment.

As for Frantoni he cannot understand what has come over him.

The following day her ladyship's husband, a hot-tempered Texan, confronts Luigi and informs him that his revenge will be bedding down Angelica.

On Paolo's advice Luigi tries to palm off another girl as his wife and takes her to a hotel ready for the Texan. Unfortunately the girl's mother-in-law joins them and Paolo is called in to help out. The Texan arrives, quickly followed by an ex-lover of the mother-in-law, followed by Angelica herself, followed by — well it goes on rather like the cabin sequence in *Duck Soup*.

All ends well. Luigi has his Angelica and Paolo his pamango.



◀ Some kind of Italian floral dance? From 'Due Amici, una Moglie e quattro Amanti'.

Trevor Howard as Wagner in a scene from Luchino Visconti's "Ludwig", with costume designs for "The Ring" lying around. The difficult task of putting back the cuts in a major production that were expressly made for its commercial exhibition is one of the worthwhile aims of the Venice festival. An aim, incidentally, that has its dedicated workers elsewhere.



Visconti's *Ludwig* was given a gala performance at the lovely Fenice theatre. The cuts of some 90 minutes which producer and distributors had demanded in 1973 when it was first edited, had been restored, creating a much deeper rapport between

Ludwig and his cousin, Elizabeth of Austria and wife of the Emperor Francis Joseph, and also making the second part, with its machinations of the Bavarian government, more understandable.

The film, in Visconti's typical baroque

#### 'Venice'. Continued from Page 11

*Eagle Has Two Heads*, called *Il Mistero di Oberwald*, was made on tape. It looked better on the TV screen than it did on the blow-up transference to 35mm when visual image blurring was very noticeable. Monica Vitti is the Queen who discovers her fate in the shape of a young poet who finds his way into the castle while fleeing from the police.

The main purpose of the film seemed to be to allow Antonioni to experiment with video and colour. But the colour-drama ideas seemed, to me, so simplistic (villain bathed in purple, rose rosy blooming) that one wondered what he was trying to achieve or if one was missing some intellectual point. Using these ideas to reinforce a romantic melodrama seemed odd to say the least. And Vitti looked too young as the Queen and Franco Baricelli too wooden as the poet.

#### Italian Cinema

Another RAI (TV) backed film was *Le Regazze di Via Mattehne*, a documentary-style street life story, and Franco Taviani's *Masoch* was a strange film, showing in brief, flashback scenes of the marriage and life of Leopold Sacher-Masoch and his wife (based on her memoirs). It went way over the top for most tastes and made *Marietta* look like a child's work-out.

In Valentino Orsini's *Uomini e No* (Men and Non Men), night and empty 1944 Milanese street scenes (photographed in desaturated colour), were the background to the story of a resistance fighter who meets

his former love of three years ago. She is married and they have both to decide if they should or could take up their relationship again in the light of more important things to do.

#### Opera Prima

A Spanish film in this section also had this very title, although the 'opera' referred to was that of a Madrid underground stop. Fernando Trueba's first feature was a light and likeable tale of a young Spanish boy and girl. Their ups and downs formed an old story-line, but a promising debut.

Not all films were in Competition and thus some did not come in for prize consideration. One that certainly would have done if it had been eligible was the Polish director Zanussi's *Contract*. Something of a change of pace and style for him I am pleased to report, as he seemed in danger of getting into a rut with his last two films.

The 'contract' of the title is a marriage one — two young people who have been living together for some time decide to get married, not simply in a civil ceremony but a religious one. The marriage brings together their respective families, including a relative from the West (a former ballerina played by Leslie Caron) and her daughter. Family antagonisms break out at the civil ceremony but worse is to follow, the bride cannot go through with the religious ceremony and flees.

Despite this, the wedding party is still held which gradually degenerates and brings out the worst in everyone, especially the Westerners. Occasionally over-extended,

style, remains somewhat stolid, not having the dash of *Senso* nor the intensely human love of tradition exemplified in *The Leopard*. But it was an evening not without merit and worthy of the occasion.

but a striking and witty comment on today's life-styles.

But the film to take a prize from both the Grand Jury and the FIPRESCI jury was Angelopoulos' very recent film (only just finished in time for Venice) *Alexander The Great*. Lasting almost four hours it was an epic piece in many ways but, for once, time did not seem to matter, so rigorous was the director in combining style (continuous long shots with travelling camera) with his story of a modern day Alexander who clashes with authority (in the form of the local teacher), as well as with some Italian enarchs.

Having kidnapped a party of English people, Alexander returns to his native village where the tragedy works, inexorably to its conclusion. A failed revolution, but a most successful movie.

Much else was happening, apart from the Competition and Workshop films. There was a large Mizoguchi retrospective — an Italian Contro Campus section (without translations this tended to be very much for the natives), also a series of Mid-Day/Mid-Night presentations — a mixed bag of movies from the current commercial world, including *Black Stallion*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Reindeer Man*, *Oncle D'Amérique* from Cannes, and a re-edited version of *Palat's Loulou*.

We were also treated to three prints from the Cinémathèque Francaise of Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, *Rear Window* (with Grace Kelly as every man's perfect cop blonde heroine) and the delightful *comédie noire*, *The Trouble With Harry*. One hopes that these wonderful vintage works will soon be publicly available.

# CALIGULA

GTO FILMS

CALLED BY THE British Press hand-out, "the most controversial film ever made," by an American critic "the biggest genitalia costume ever made," and by a German magazine "a Ben Hur of pornography and sadism," the Italian-American production of *Caligula*, written originally by Gore Vidal and directed, for the most part, by Tinto Brass, comes to us after much pre- and post production argument and litigation.

A three-and-a-half hour version was shown at the 1979 Cannes Festival and a 160 minute version was premiered in Rome last year. Since then, after finally being cleared of legal restraint, it has been seen in Europe and in America, where, not surprisingly, it has occasioned condemnation from some quarters but smart attendance at the box-office and it would seem that the 14 (17) million dollar investment will by no means have gone down the drain.

It would not, perhaps, be wise of the mark to suggest that the project began as sophisticated porn allied to a shrewd, intelligent depiction of Rome at the time of Caligula. Fellini had, to some extent, anticipated a similar idea with *Satyricon*, but that work, safeguarded by a classical work, was Felliniana. Tinto Brass wanted no literary fantasy but a straight-forward characterization of the syphilitic Tiberius and the psychopathic Caligula and the customs (political, social and sexual) which made up their day to day living.

Gore Vidal, who withdrew his name from the script, is quoted as saying: "I have nothing against sex. But my script has become an encyclopedia of pornography."

Brass insisted: "Caligula was not a beast, on the contrary he was a rebel against the stupidity of the rulers, the foulness of the system which he represented but denounced. This man mocked authority. It was he who revealed the Caesars as gangsters with their halos of glory established by power. He wanted to destroy those halos."

Tacitus and Suetonius are the two most frequently quoted historians of this period but more recent opinion differs with them on occasions. The Emperor Tiberius, (Peter O'Toole) sick of the corrupt and conniving Roman senate moved in 27AD to Capri where he stayed and ruled for the last ten years of his more than troubled life. With him went the famous jurist and senator, Cocceius Nerva (John Gielgud) — the only senator to follow the Emperor. He was a faithful companion to the Emperor but committed suicide in 34 AD.

The only time Tiberius left Capri for any length of time was to attend the wedding of his nephew Caius (Caligula — Malcolm McDowell) whom later, in a special ritual

Below and right: Malcolm McDowell as Caligula.





(deposcio barbel, Tiberius made it known that Caligula was to follow him as Emperor.

Tiberius died in 37AD at a villa at Misenum on his way back to Capri. Tacitus gives it that he died a tyrant's death by smothering on the orders of Murco, the prefect, while Caligula waited, terrified, in an adjacent room for the news of his uncle's death.

During the last years of Tiberius's reign there had been a bloody campaign against the emperor's family and followers but Caligula had escaped the persecution, pretending to be rather simple and modest.

Caligula's first months as Emperor were liberal and intelligent but after some eight months he suffered a serious illness which appears to have affected him mentally. His character changed and the last thirty-odd months of his reign in 41 AD saw the legend of his cruelties and licentiousness created.

To next page ...

Apart from the characters already mentioned there appear in the film, Caligula's sister, Drusilla, played by the lovely Terese Ann Savoy who was seen in Jancso's *Private Vice, Public Virtue*. Drusilla was perhaps Caligula's only true love — "I would make you my queen, my wife," Gore Vidal makes him say (Gore Vidal's *Caligula* by William Howard published by Warner Books).

Cesonis, Caligula's wife, is splendidly played by Helen Mirren giving the character a genuine depth.

Other effective performances come from John Steiner as Caligula's secretary and confidant, Longino; Giancarlo Badessi as Tiberius' mentally unbalanced brother, Claudio; Guido Mammari as Macrone, the conniving chief of the Praetorian Guard, and Adriana Asti as Ennia, Macrone's wife and Caligula's mistress.

The production designer was the distinguished Danilo Donati and the sets and props are fantastic — in more ways than one.

The film is released in Britain by GTO films.



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their minds begin to wander, particularly if the book is Vance Packard's *The Sexual Wilderness* (a Pan publication) or the museum has on view a number of Greek casts featuring the male torso in

splendidly emphatic virility.

The illustrations on these pages and page 32 are from a forthcoming release by Entertainment Film Distributors, *The Visiting Sex Service*.

*a forthcoming release from Entertainment Film Distributors*



The lovely lady is reading Vance Packard's *The Sexual Wilderness* and she is, probably, up to Part One, chapter five, which is entitled 'The Married Confrontation: coping with some novel patterns,' and goes on about 'developments within the conjugal bed'. See previous pages.

VIDEO REVIEWS from page 20.

**Tarka The Otter.** 91 mins. Rank Video Library  
Directed by David Cobham. 1979  
Narrated by Peter Ustinov

It might be easy to consign this very recent film to the realm of 'children's entertainment' but it was, of course,

taken from something of a classic book by Henry Williamson and the director and various cameramen have done a magnificent job of transposing the story to film without making it yet another cute animal story. Only the human characters, seen along the banks of the river Torridge in Devon, seem a bit lumpish. Otherwise quite an enchanting and surprising movie which I myself am sorry I missed in the cinema. Excellent photography and again a good quality cassette.

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# SEXY



Anyone for Darts? from 'Skin Deep'. (Amanda Films).

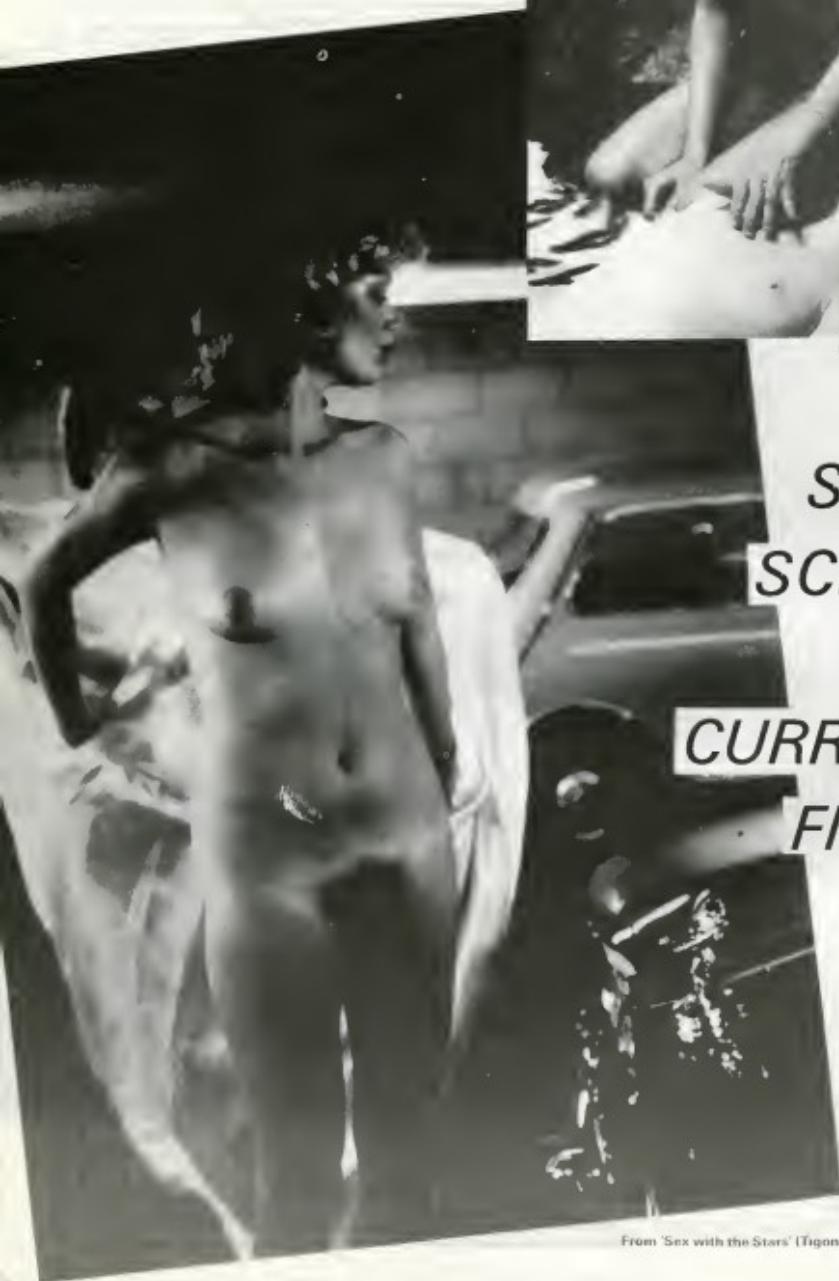
## SCENES IN CURRENT FILMS

Right: From 'Immoral'. (Facelift Films).



Above: From 'Sexaphobia'. (Golden Era Films).

From 'Confessions from a Roman Orgy' (Messalina, Messalina). Witchgrove forthcoming release.



From 'Sexaphobia'.

★  
**SEXY  
SCENES  
IN  
CURRENT  
FILMS**



From 'Sex with the Stars' (Tigon Films).

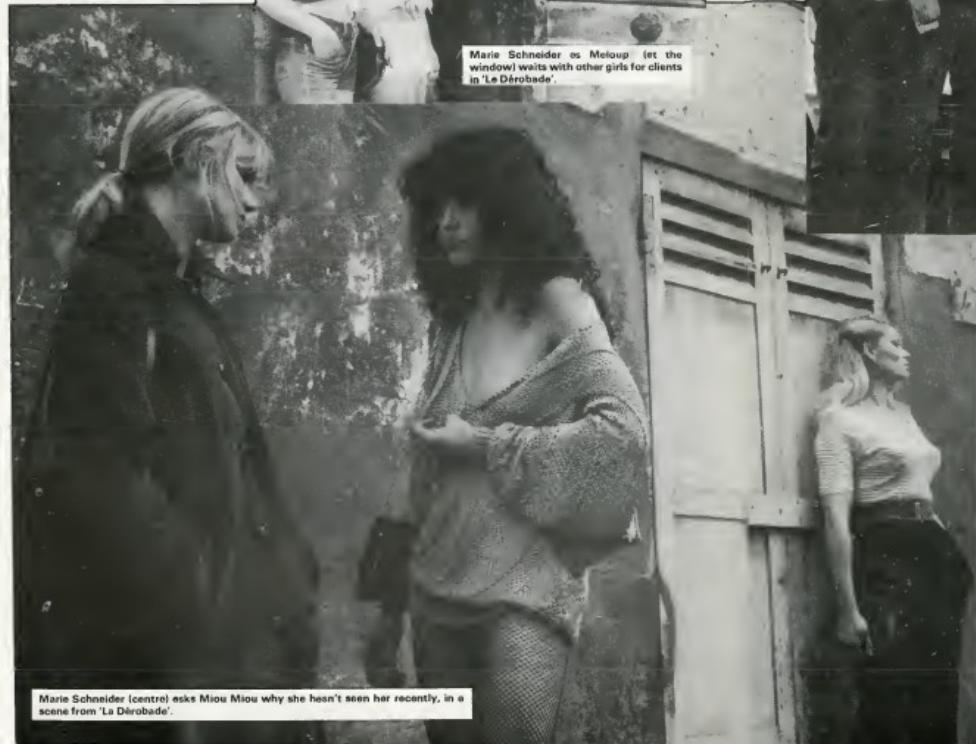


Above and below: Magazine astrologist gets initiated in 'Sex with the Stars'. (Tigon Films)



# La Dérobade

(The Life)



# Baby Tramp



Denise is a simple country girl who lives on a farm with her aunt. She soon becomes bored with the routine of the farm and decides to head for the bright city lights.

Hitch-hiking along she meets up with a number of dubious characters, one of whom, an underwear salesman, tries to take advantage of her naivete. It is in fleeing from him that she meets up with Frank, a nightclub owner.

With his expensive car and beautiful apartment he represents everything Denise is missing in life and she quickly falls in love with him.

Frank has a bevy of girls at his disposal and soon tires of Denise as he does with all the girls he meets, using them and then discarding them to make way for the next.

Discovering Frank with another woman Denise realizes her true situation and heads back home to the life she understands.





# Battle Beyond the Stars

**BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS**, an Orion Pictures release through Warner Bros., is a science fiction space adventure that involves a peaceful planet called Akir, which is threatened with extinction unless it submits to a ruthless conqueror named Sedor. Sedor has in his possession a weapon called a Stellar Converter, which is capable of eliminating Akir completely, unless his demands are met.

In order to save themselves, the Akira send an amnesiac named Shad to enlist the aid of intergalactic soldiers of fortune, who soon form an unusual alliance of aliens for the defence of the Akira homeworld. Thus the elements of futuristic fantasy are brought together leading to survival warfare in space, and a spectacular climax.

*Battle Beyond The Stars* is the brainchild of independent executive producer Roger Corman, who envisioned a science fiction elaboration of the classic Kurosawa epic *The Seven Samurai*, which was later successfully given an updated western focus in *The Magnificent Seven*.

"I always wanted to make *The Magnificent Seven* in space," Corman explains, "but I really didn't feel that the timing was right until *Star Wars* came out and was so quickly and enthusiastically received. Now my idea doesn't seem quite so bizarre, combining a space fantasy with a life or death struggle, although I'm sure that *Battle Beyond The Stars* will be considered extreme in both respects."

*Battle Beyond The Stars* is Murakami's first assignment as a feature director, indicating not only Corman's faith in his organizational talents (he was both art and aerial director of Corman on *Von Richthofen & Brown*), but in his ability to integrate spectacular miniature special effects with live action.

Richard Thomas appears as Shad, the young Akira who is entrusted with the responsibility of finding professional warriors to help in the defence of his planet.

Robert Vaughn, co-stars with Richard Thomas as Gelt, one of the most dangerous soldiers of fortune in the universe, who agrees to help the Akira simply for "a meal and a place to hide."

George Peppard, co-stars with Richard Thomas and Robert Vaughn as Cowboy, a footloose yet tradition-bound free spirit who is rescued by Shad from a group of space hijackers and decides to return the favour in the Akiran fight for survival.

Cowboy, the classic western hero who is placed in an era of spaceships and alien bantle, is a character who enjoys a challenge and impinges to keep his sense of humour under fire.

John Saxon appears in *Battle Beyond The Stars* as Sedor, the ruthless conqueror and calculating villain who intends to subjugate the entire planet of Akir to his own will.

A relative newcomer to acting with respect to her co-stars, Darlene Fluegel appears as the sympathetic and naive Nanelia, love interest to Shad (Richard Thomas) and

Sybil Danning as St. Exmin, the voluptuous Valkyrie warrior who loves nothing more than a fight to the death. The opportunity to defend Akir from the evil warlord, Sedor marks the ultimate test of her skills in Roger Corman's production, '*Battle Beyond the Stars*'.



daughter of intergalactic weapons supplier Dr Hephaestus (Sam Jaffel). Nanelie's innocence is offset by her ability to program and analyze computer data, a talent which proves invaluable during the conflict with Sador (John Saxon).

Sybil Danning is a model of international repute, although her assignments originally came from Europe, gradually leading her to film roles such as St. Exmin, the Valkyne warrior in *Battle Beyond The Stars*.<sup>1</sup>

St. Exmin is an exprovent whose pleasure is derived from battle and the lure of dramatic victories. Sybil Danning is an

actress who has fought for a variety of roles which allow her to display her considerable acting talent as well as her beauty and sex appeal. Her remarkable portrayal of the fanatical and sadistic German terrorist in the Israeli docudrama of the Entebbe raid in *Operation Thunderbolt* is a good example of Sybil Danning's arrival as an actress.



The main protagonists of 'Battle Beyond the Stars' with 'The Hemmerhead', a huge Malmori Flagship commanded by the evil Sador, seen above right. This ship has a force field of 10.6 and houses the powerful stellar converter. Shad and Nanelie are seen kneeling with Cowboy, St. Exmin, Caymen and Gelt behind them. The face of Sador is seen in the sky.

# Resnais' Uncle

ALAIN RESNAIS' new film *My American Uncle* (not the correct translation of *Mon oncle d'Amérique*) is about behaviour patterns and suggests that our acts are motivated by the need to survive and dominate and that until we can find an effective way to deal with stress (which paralyses our nervous system, develops anguish and destroys our ability to act), aggression and war will always be with us. Here, again, there is the suggestion of scientific interference.

The film came about as the result of Professor Henri Laborit being asked, some years ago, to write the scenario for a short film for a memory aid product. The professor agreed provided that Resnais directed the film. The short film was not, however, made, but the director became interested in the idea of a film based on Laborit's theories and after talking with the scriptwriter Jean Grault, the concept of doing a fiction film revealing these theories, not through the mouths of the characters but alongside their actions, was adopted.

"Laborit recorded his ideas quite freely", says Resnais, "and we simply tried to draw them towards the things that were useful to help the spectator to experience the story in a different way from the usual fiction narrative. *Mon oncle d'Amérique* does not act as a support for Laborit's work. It draws the attention to the possibilities, in real life as well as in biology, of another hazard (danger) other than the dramatic and psychological one."

Unlike other Resnais films the narrative is told chronologically even though, at the beginning, it is a character's voice-over detailing images from his or her youth.

Le Gall was born into a middle-class, intellectual family, whose somewhat eccentric grandfather took him to live on a small island which became, for him, an essential element in the subsequent development of his imagination (the ages of three or four are the most impressionable of our lives, asserts Laborit).

Janine Garnier was born into a working-class, socialist family and recites, when quite young, before the family and friends, Blaud's famous poem 'Liberty'. The appreciation she is accorded makes her turn towards the stage as a career even though her family is against it.

Ragueneau is the younger son of a near-impoverished farmer. He is the only one of the three who does not receive any kind of imaginative impulse as a boy. He takes a correspondence course in accountancy and finally marries and leaves the farm to work in the textile industry.

One element is introduced that seems somewhat gimmicky, certainly not scientific or logically used. Le Gall falls in love (as a boy often does) with a film star, in this case, Danielle Darrieux, and film clips of her are introduced at various stages of Le Gall's career. Janine Garnier has a crush on Jean Marais and the same thing is done during her career. Both of these are personal

fantasies.

In the case of Ragueneau we see, not Ragueneau's personal fantasy with a film star, but the director's recognition of the likeness between Depardieu (who plays Ragueneau) and Jean Gabin, and he introduces, during Ragueneau's career, clips from Gabin films that often express not only a similar situation but also a facial expression. This seems gimmicky and a flaw in a film that is otherwise strictly objective.

The three characters meet and influence each other's lives, causing happiness and distress and it is noticeable that the two from a background in which imagination plays a strong part come off best, being best able to survive in the rat (not an irrelevant word) race. It is Ragueneau who, in place of imagination, has religious faith, who cannot take the stress and, unable to dominate others, turns inwards to try and destroy himself.

It is a wordy film and the subtitles have a particularly difficult task. Perhaps Laborit's voice could be dubbed as his is essentially a non-acting role.

## DON GIOVANNI

WHETHER OR NOT the producers bore in mind that 1980 would see something like 16 major exhibitions in the Veneto celebrating the 400th anniversary of the death of Andrea Palladio, Italy's most famous architect, one does not know, but several of his most notable buildings and frescoed interiors provide a magnificent setting for Losey's film adaptation of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

It cannot be denied that reaction to the beauty of the image lessens one's concentration on the music — but that seems an ungrateful criticism of this imaginative film.

In trying to bring the reality of cinema to the opera Losey was obviously faced with many problems such as how you make a static sexist (as in the unmasking of



Leporello) into a believable reality. He has done this ingeniously by putting the sextet on the stage of the famous Teatro Olimpico and having an audience watching the characters.

Perhaps the final momentous entrance of the Commander has not quite the terror that could have been achieved with film but, overall, the production is both original and persuasive.

Fortunately Losey has two realistic singers in Ruggero Raimondi and Jose Van Dam as the Don and his servant and on film they bring out several points that go far beyond stage performances.

When one considers the obstacles Losey had to overcome particularly the restricted time he had, the results are very, very good indeed.

THE CULTURE OF CHINA and the social changes there over the past 50 years are absorbing subjects and will probably tempt many a Western writer and film crew to investigate the material at its source. As a small beginning we have had the first historical retrospective of China's cinema at the NFT and a very useful dossier on the subject: 'Electric Shadows: Chinese Cinema', published by the BFI.

This is surely the first major revolution that can be traced, from its seed to fruition, through its popular cinema and as such is an important event, for while only some of the films, such as Two Stage Sisters have entertainment (limited at that) appeal to Western viewers, it is as an historical document that they will remain important. What is needed now, if they are at all available, are news-reels.

The articles in the dossier are particularly useful not only in coming to terms with the accepted conventions of a national art but also in placing the films in their social and political context.

After being submerged for almost 200 hours in a sensory deprivation tank, Alan Arkin (left) as Simon, is brought back to consciousness by a group of think-tank scientists who are brainwashing him into believing he is really a visitor from another planet. From the new comedy, 'Simon'. (Orion-Werner Bros.).



# THE HUNTER

In 1976, film producer Mort Engelberg heard about a man who makes his living as a bounty hunter. His name was Ralph "Papa" Thorson and in three decades he had apprehended more than 5,000 fugitives from justice, people who jumped bail rather than appear in court.

Sensing rich potential for a movie, Engelberg contacted Thorson. What he found was a multi-dimensional man who deals in danger and violence, whose friends include ex-cons, hookers, cops and priests, and whose loves include classical music, chess, antique toys and astrology. The producer promptly tied up the movie rights to Thorson's life; this before a proposed book on the bounty hunter was written.

"The material was unique," explains Engelberg. "There was action, of course, but there was also humour and a relationship story: Thorson's relationship to his woman, and his relationship to his friends, some of whom he helped send to prison."

"Thorson is the last of his kind, a man born into an age to which he does not really belong. Insurance companies won't insure his life, he will receive no social security benefits. He operates under a Supreme Court decision written in 1872."

"I felt if ever there was material for an explosive film, this was it."

The result is *The Hunter*, an offbeat action drama produced by Engelberg and directed by Buzz Kulik. Starring in the film (he was the only actor Engelberg ever had in mind) is Steve McQueen.

The role seems designed for him. He played a bounty hunter for three years in *Wanted - Dead or Alive*, the television series that catapulted him to stardom. And the words used to describe Thorson - 'picarésque', 'loner', 'one-of-a-kind' - are terms applied to McQueen. At a time when larger-than-life heroes seem to have disappeared from the screen, McQueen, like Thorson, is the last of a breed, an actor in the mould of Cooper, Gable, Tracy and Bogart.

Also heading the cast of the film are Eli Wallach, Kathryn Harrold, LeVar Burton and Ben Johnson as Sherriff Strong.

The screenplay of *The Hunter* was written by Ted Leighton and Peter Hyams, based upon the book by Christopher Keane and the life of Ralph Thorson. The story is true. Some changes were made and some dramatic license taken, but the major events depicted in the film actually happened.

## WAJDA AND T.V.

THE INTERPLAY OF Stage, TV and Film in Poland is interesting even if, at times, it does get a bit claustrophobic and one senses a need for opening windows with a bit of investigative documentary work.

However, directors have been testing the limits of their working area and Wajda's *November Night* is not only an imaginative production for TV but also quite a stirring piece.



Steve McQueen and Kathryn Harrold in *The Hunter*, directed by Buzz Kulik.



Steve McQueen, as a bounty hunter, getting a wanted man in *The Hunter*. (CIC distribution).

It is based on Wajda's theatrical production of the verse play by Stanislaw Wyspianski which is about the somewhat disorganized uprising of the Poles in November 1830 against the Russian occupation.

Prince Constantine, the Czar's governor of Poland, is seen in his palace in a state of petrified indecision while the Poles in revolt lurk in the surrounding grounds, dim figures moving among the trees in the dusk, themselves undecided as to their course of action.

Greek gods are invoked by the director as a kind of spirit of Poland erging on the insurgents in the name of national independence and they are skilfully mixed into the images. Unfortunately their enthusiastic intoning is carried on at a spanking pace and it's a quick reader who can finish the

subtitles before another set replaces them.

At 107 minutes it's a bit long but the piece shows Wajda's exceptional command of the medium. It was seen in the recent season of Polish TV work shown at the NFT.

## INDEPENDENT CINEMAS

London is fairly well off now for independent cinemas showing first-rate repertory programmes and first-run films of quality. Certainly one of the most consistently interesting is the Electric Cinema in the Portobello Road which, through November, continues a close look at the work of Charles Laughton as well as offering Fellini's *Sauvageon* and Casanova, a clutch of Herzog films including his 30-minute *La Souffrière* (the volcano that never did), Bergman's *Magic Flute*, Mizoguchi's *Five Women Around Utamaro*, Rhee's *Performance* and Pasolini's *Oedipus and Medea*.

# NEWS ... VIEWS ... REVIEWS ...

## FASSBINDER COUNTRY

A LOT OF PEOPLE can't forgive Fassbinder for being so prolific — as they couldn't forgive Picasso. It just couldn't be all good stuff. In fact there are similarities between the film-maker and the artist, in the way Fassbinder adapts, with complete assurance, different styles, and idioms for his own purposes, quoting often from, or re-interpreting different genres or previous films by directors he admires.

His output (over 30 films in 11 years, plus the latest mammoth 5½ hour TV series seen at Venic) does have its peaks and troughs, but always it is an artist working in drama to express his ideas (political or social), about society and the human condition. He can be tedious or outrageous but it is rare you finish by dismissing the film, Fassbinder is too concerned to be dismissed even at his most facile.

In *A Year with Thirteen Moons* Fassbinder uses the *nouveau roman* technique of slowly allowing the pieces to fall into place and he makes of it a story of frustrated love, an investigation, and an examination of a life-style, essentially clandestine, in a faceless indifferent city such as Frankfurt. "Frankfurt is not a place of amiable mediocrity, reconciliation of opposites, nor peaceful or kind. In Frankfurt social contradictions are encountered at all hours of the day and night, on every street corner, contradictions in the process of being newly and more craftily concealed."

It is the story of a married man, with a daughter, who, having fallen in love with his partner in the meat trade, Anton Saltz, goes to Casablanca where he undergoes an operation. From then on he dresses as a woman and is known as Elvira.

Saltz abandons him and he lives, for a time, with another man who, as the film begins, is also abandoning him.

Left alone, he reflects on his past, goes to Saltz to apologize for an interview he has given in which he has probably labelled Saltz, and then, dressed in male attire, goes to his wife in the hope of returning to her and their daughter. He is sadly rejected, then he returns to his flat to find Saltz in bed with a prostitute, Red Zora, and commits suicide.

Along the way there are some bizarre, surrealistic moments, and some sharp observation, and always the theme that is rarely left out of a Fassbinder script — the individual's precarious position in a crowd that is manipulated by power — the plight of the vulnerable, emotional person who, apparently, in the years containing 13 new moons, is likely to experience a very dicey time.

## TERRORISM AND TOTALITARIANISM

ABOUT THREE-QUARTERS of the way through Fassbinder's *The Third Generation* I did rather begin to feel that the director had been somewhat over-exposed these last few weeks. One hundred and eleven minutes to say what is said here is overlong, but



From Fassbinder's 'A Year with Thirteen Moons'. Volker Spengler (foreground) as Elvira is attacked by the men he has tried to importune.

that said it has plenty of notable images with a talented cast giving an exposition of how at least one terrorist group can work.

This band is not the impassioned variety but a group of middle-class people in their thirties dabbling in protest and finally becoming clumsily involved in terrorist activities. They are gullibly led on by a supposed leader who eventually is revealed as a police contact giving point to Fassbinder's statement:

"Although one may vaguely understand the motives of the early (First and Second Generation) terrorists (patriotism, freedom etc.), to understand those of the third generation is more difficult. It seems to me that these have less in common with their predecessors than with this society (German) and the power it wields. I am convinced that they do not know what they are doing, that the only sense that can be found in their actions lies in the act itself, the pseudo-adventure of taking on the system."

"This phenomenon, which exists exclusively in West Germany, has a great deal to do with this country. Our democracy is based on fundamental values which can degenerate all too easily into taboos — which the State then blindly defends against its own citizens; this State which is becoming just a little more totalitarian with each passing day. What a godsend terrorists must be to this State in its present stage of development. If these did not exist, the State would have to invent them. Perhaps it even has?"

We are on familiar Fassbinder ground,

Burton Brecht, Johanna, a German musician, now naturalised and resident in Britain receives two old pre-war friends, Gerhard and Kurt and their half-sister, Sophie, in his home in London.

Apart from a renewal of friendship, Kurt and Sophie are in England about a book they have published. It was written in England about ex-nazis and their place in business and politics in post-war West Germany. The book has become the subject of a libel action and there are some tricky legal points due to the fiction documentary style of the book and to a certain German law passed to prevent violence and terrorism.

When Sophie sits at dinner with her brothers and Johannes and talks of the difficulty of defining freedom and of safe guarding it she might be Fassbinder's mother talking to Fassbinder in the film *German Autumn*.

The question of how far can State police go in maintaining law and order before a state of totalitarianism is established is a very arguable one and one which West German film directors have explored but not resolved in many productions.

*At the Fountainhead*, shot but not too obviously, on a limited budget, is often too slow moving and the dialogue often too expressionlessly spoken but the script is basically firm and interesting and the flash backs to the Thirties (often with archive material) are effective.

The interplay rather than integration of fact and fiction is intriguingly exemplified in the way Johannes is represented. He is played by the person on whom he is based — Val Kennedy — and also by two actors.

More suited to TV than the cinema, perhaps, which is not meant to be derogatory

## HOW FREE IS FREEDOM

Covering areas of Fassbinder country is a new BFI Production Board film, *At the Fountainhead* (of German Strength) written and directed by Anthea Kennedy and Nicolas

## PERSONAL FREEDOM

Goran Paskaljevic's *Special Treatment* operates on two levels. Basically it is a very human story of the treatment of a handful of alcoholics, and on the other hand it raises the question of whether, no matter how well-intentioned, a man (regime) has the right to impose his concept of human fulfilment on those who oppose his views.

While, politically, this is a viable question, the director has not chosen a situation that works in a political way. Alcoholism, after all, affects not only the health of the imbiber but often the happiness and well-being of his family and friends. The doctor in this case is not brain-washing his patients into accepting a political ideology but, in fact, making them better able to face up to the problems and decisions of life.

The question here is more; is it better to be able to control one's emotions and organize one's time? A very funny example is the doctor's almost scheduled seduction of the brewer's PR girl or to go through life in a kind of emotional shambles, unable to play well unless drunk (in the case of the musician), unable to overcome his stutter unless drunk (in the case of the actor — further amusingly complicated by the fact that when he is drunk he forgets his lines).

In fact, a warning and a question come at the close of the film with the old lottery ticket seller's protest. It is a warning that society's behaviour patterns are changing from individual choice to manipulated mass choice. The 20th century has seen the rise of mass media which, with the changes in family life-styles, has continually pushed us towards becoming a robot-like or anti-like society. One has only to consider the hordes of commuters moving to and from work at set hours, shopping in droves at special centres at regular times, buying

From 'Special Treatment'. The rebel patient injects alcohol into a basket of apples and offers them around to other alcoholics with disastrous (if amusing) results.

commodities they have been brain-washed to buy via television, to see the validity of the warning. The question, though, is difficult to resolve. Should we have the right to become alcoholics if we want to? Do we have the right to enjoy despair when we could be disciplined into good, healthy citizens? The thing is, you get no-where without discipline — it all depends on the discipline.

Paskaljevic seems, in fact, prepared to weaken his political allusions for the sake of comedy — even the most sycophantic of the doctor's patients is seen as a comic concentration camp warden.

Nevertheless the piece is well-played and the humour is never forced.

Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyrie* and Isolde's death music are used amusingly (the latter a kind of *Altmann* for the doctor).

## GODARD AGAIN

A critic when attending a film press show is invariably given some information on the film which can vary from a brief synopsis with cast and credits to a laudatory essay that suggests he is about to enjoy a memorable cinematic experience. In between these extremes there is, more rarely, a thoughtful description of the film and the background to it that can be most helpful in coming to terms with an offbeat production.

Occasionally such an introduction leads one to expect more than one gets, or more than one can find, in the film, but invariably it is well expressed and for this reason we start a review of the new Godard film with three paragraphs from the distributor's (*Artificial Eye*) press handout.

The film has a four-part structure and the fragmentary narrative concerns three characters whose lives intertwine. The four

parts are entitled successively: The Imaginary, Fear, Commerce, and Music. In brief, 'the Imaginary' shows Denise Rimbaud (Nathalie Baye) who wants to live in the country and decides to give up her job and her boyfriend. The 'Fear' is that of Paul Godard (the name of Godard's father) Jacques Dutronc who is estranged from his wife and daughter and whose girlfriend, Denise Rimbaud, wants to leave him. 'Commerce' tells the story of Isabelle Rivière (Isabelle Huppert) a prostitute who submits with indifference to the sexual fantasies of her clients. In 'Music', all the threads woven by the characters in the previous parts are unravelled and in the last frames of the film a group of musicians are actually seen playing the film's main theme while Paul Godard dies without knowing it.

This deeply pessimistic film makes frequent and striking use of stop-motion photography, breaking down images in an extraordinary way in a suspension of movement and time. There are also recognisable Godardian devices in the film: political allusions, philosophical and historical digressions (the story of the migration of the blackbird), nods to people whom he admires (in this case Marguerite Duras whose voice is heard on the soundtrack), epigrams etc. There is also a surreal element in a number of scenes. (Bunuel's scriptwriter, Jean-Claude Carrière and Anne-Marie Merville are credited as authors of the screenplay although Godard wrote the dialogue.)

The film is reputedly influenced by the work of the American writer, Charles Bukowski, which is most evident in the use of language. Godard deliberately chose to have the English subtitles made in America as he wanted to keep a certain coarseness and slangy quality which he thought he could not get in English. This will explain the use of certain unfamiliar expressions in the titles, for example, the use of the word 'Vulm'.

Pessimism is really the right word for *Slow Motion* and one can only assume that this sour look at relationships between men and women reflects a growing (over the past ten years) disillusion with the media rat race, the derigation by money in the claustrophobic areas of commerce and the increase of indifference. In fact there are only two people who appear to like each other — Isabelle and Denise, when the former takes over the latter's flat — there is a sense of comradeship that might be symbolic.

There are, of course, the usual cinematic effects that one expects of Godard in the 60's and look, now, for the most part, incongruous. It seems as though the director has looked at some Fassbinder but the message still comes across — Godard is a born film-maker and like any good artist is still prepared to take risks.



# DRESSED TO KILL

In Filmways Pictures' terrifying suspense film *Dressed to Kill*, 39-year-old writer-director Brian De Palma brings back to the screen the Grand Guignol-type drama for which he has become world famous.

Although De Palma has often worked with young, relatively unknown actors, in *Dressed to Kill* he has such experienced and acclaimed stars as Michael Caine, Angie Dickinson and Nancy Allen.

In *Dressed to Kill* De Palma worked with George Litto. The two men had previously teamed to make the international box-office success *Obsession*, which starred Cliff Robertson and Genevieve Bujold. The film was De Palma's first exposure to the "mass" audience.

De Palma, who confesses to being preoccupied with dark nightmares of the soul, such as his *Carrie* and *Sisters*, in *Dressed to Kill* deals with a story of tense reality, the search for a psychotic killer who murders for no apparent reason.

In the highly-charged drama, set in New York City, where the greater part of the filming took place, Caine portrays Dr Robert Elliott, a fashionable East Side psychiatrist. Dickinson is a suburban housewife whose daydreams and nightmares are filled with erotic fantasies. And Allen plays a high-class call girl, Liz Blake, whose activities centre about the Wall Street financial district. She witnessed one of a series of murders and is subsequently hunted by the killer and harassed by the police.

Keith Gordon completes the principal cast as a young electronics genius and Dickinson's son.

This first star to be cast in *Dressed to Kill* was Nancy Allen. De Palma had written the role of Liz Blake with her in mind. They had first met when she auditioned for and was cast opposite John Travolta in his *Carrie*. Three months after the film was completed they started dating and four years later she became Mrs Brian De Palma.



3



From 'Dressed to Kill', a special De Palma mixture of 'Psycho' and 'Homicide' with his touch of special genius for the genre.

Michael Caine is the psychiatrist, Dr Robert Elliott and Angie Dickinson is Kate Miller, a sexually frustrated wife whose husband's ineffective early morning "wham-bangs" at sex only serve to push her towards fantasy and self arousal. 'Dressed to Kill' is Brian De Palma on top form in a story which has a few untidy ends but which takes hold of you from the opening shots of Angie showering (one of the most sensual sequences in cinema) to the final shower sequence with Miss Nancy Allen supplying the divine body.



From 'Richard's Things'.

The London Film Festival opens this month with Kurosawa's Cannes award-winning *Kagemusha* and continues (13th-30th) with special emphasis on British and American independent productions but also embracing some major movies such as Scorsese's *The Raging Bull*, Wajda's *The Conductor* starring John Gielgud, Anthony Harvey's *Richard's Things*, Schroeter's *Palermo or Wolfsburg*,

Angelopoulos's *Alexander the Great*, Makavejev's *Sweet Movie*, Bellocchio's *Leap in the Void*, Wiseman's *Model*, Tony Gatlif's *Prostitute*, Heartland (USA), *Portrait of Teresa* (Cuba), *I am Anne Magman* (Belgium), Kevin Brownlow's restoration of Gance's *Napoléon* — the list is not complete at the time of writing but early application for tickets is urged.

# HORROR FILE

A HORROR FILM of the demonic possession variety is *Nurse Sherri* starring Jill Jacobson as a nurse who becomes the intermediary of a revengeful spirit.

After experiencing a strange assault — a rape by an invisible presence — the young nurse changes from a pleasant, even-tempered girl, much liked by her patients, to a strangely enclosed

Jill Jacobson as *Nurse Sherri* is involved in some weird situations. (Amanda).



A scary moment from Dario Argento's 'Inferno', about three buildings in New York, Rome and West Germany built by an occult-orientated architect by order of the Mother of Whispers, the Mother of Tears and the Mother of Darkness. Most of the action is centred on the

New York-Mother of Darkness building where a series of horrific assassinations lead to a strange conclusion. In the cast are Eleonora Giorgi, Gabriele Lavia, Aldo Valli, Veronica Lazar and Sacha Pitoeff. A 20th Century release.



person who soon sets about murdering Dr Nelson, the former head of the hospital's surgical staff.

Two nurses begin enquiries and discover that two years earlier, a religious fanatic was forced to undergo an operation, which he objected to, in the hospital. He later died on the operating table. Is his spirit taking some form of revenge on the hospital staff?

THE NEW-STYLE horror film with its hefty slices of violence and blood-letting occurring in an otherwise mundane community continues to be very popular with audiences. One such, with good marks for tension, is *Prom Night* directed by Paul Lynch.

During an unhealthy version of hide-and-seek played in a deserted, dilapidated building, four children frighten another ten-year-old child into falling fatally from a high storey window. Scared, the four (three girls and a boy) swear not to say anything about the accident to anyone.

Six years later, when the four children are teenagers and about to enjoy their annual High School Prom, they receive menacing phone calls from someone who implies that he knows the real facts about the child's death (the police thought, incidentally, it was the work of a mentally deranged psychopath).

The film now concerns itself with how, when and by whom and why are the four teenagers attacked, and do they all come to a gory end?

Paul Lynch was born in Liverpool 34 years ago but is now a Canadian citizen living near Toronto. He was first a newspaper cartoonist but then made a TV documentary and made his way into feature films.

Jamie Lee Curtis, who has a major role and plays it attractively, is the daughter of Janet Leigh and Tony Curtis. She can be seen in two other first-rate horror films — John Carpenter's *Halloween* and *The Fog*.

IF THERE IS one thing calculated to undermine a horror film's ability to horrify it is the early laugh in the wrong place. There has only to be one more ludicrous moment to make an audience unwilling to suspend its belief.

Often it is the slack line of dialogue that rings false or players (having to act out of sequence) failing to capture the tension of previous scenes, or a situation that could, in another context, be found in a Buster Keaton film.

*Death Ship*, for all its tense moments and some very ugly scenes sinks under pressure from all three flaws.

This story, with one foot in the Marie Celeste and the other in Nazi horror camps, with a touch of the supernatural thrown in, has all the basic elements of an effective horror movie but when that damn ship sides up to the dinghy in the light of day without one of the shipwrecked seeing it, it looks like a gag rather than a shock.

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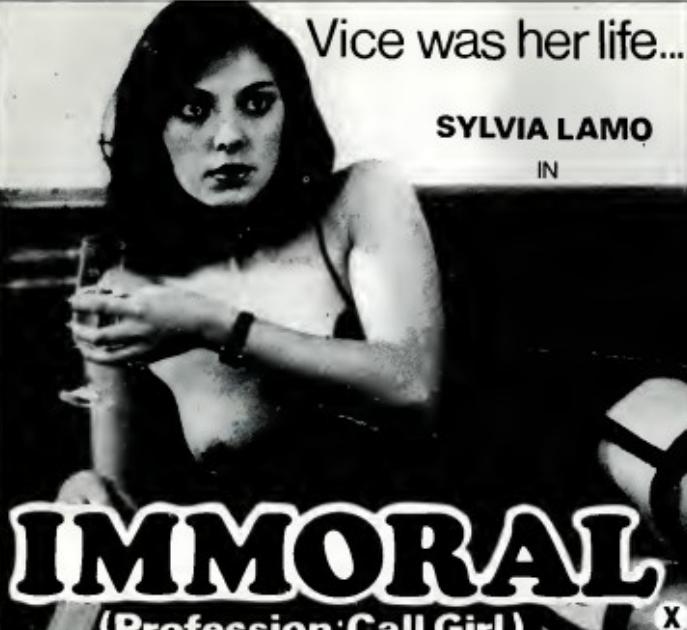
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Intervision Video Limited, Unit 1, McKay Trading Estate, Keween Road, London W10 Telephone: 01-960 8258/9/0 or 01-960 1408

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